American
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- Why good magazines go Hollywood
- The dumb way to downsize: D. C.'s bad example for other cities
- Ignorance abroad: Hanging out with James Baker's Foreign Service

The Washington Monthly

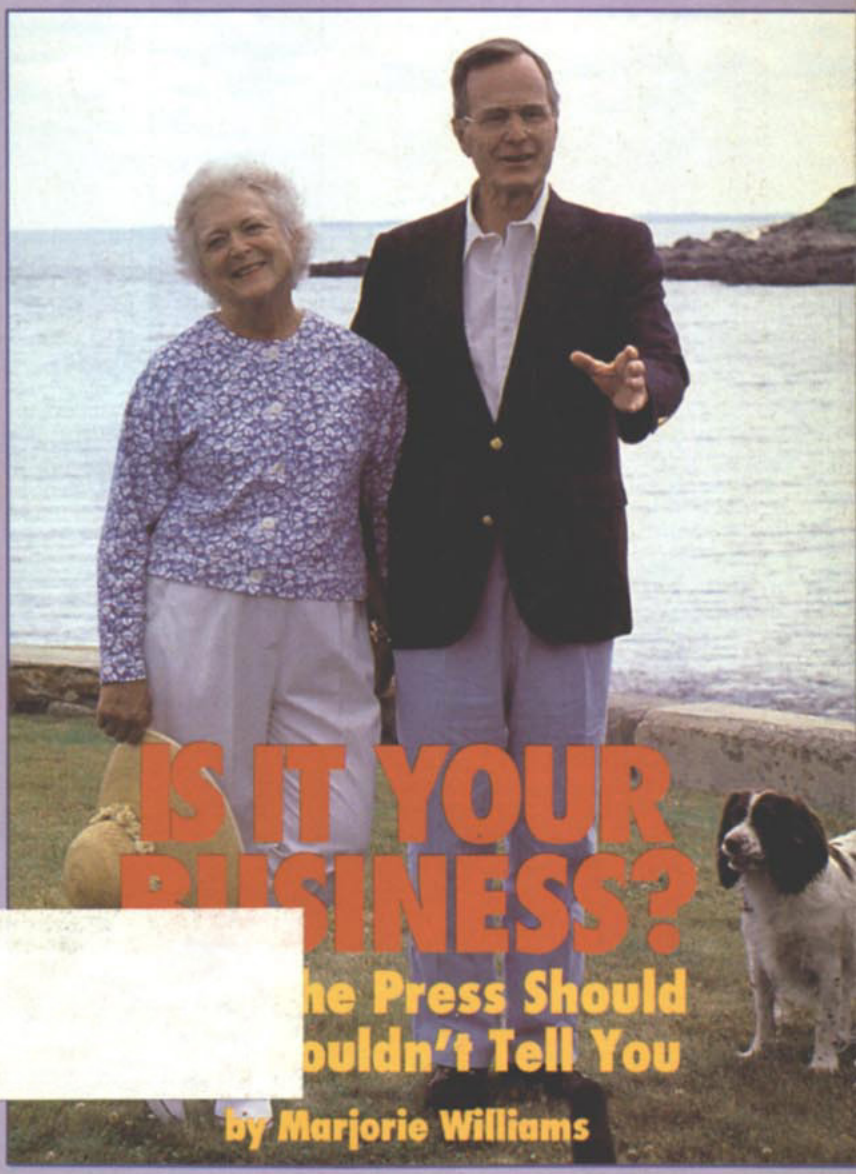
SEPTEMBER 1991/$3.50

Does he have a girlfriend?

Is he drinking in the afternoon?

Does she have a girlfriend?

And what about that dog?



IS IT YOUR BUSINESS?

he Press Should
ouldn't Tell You

by Marjorie Williams

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"...reads like a treatment for a Hollywood epic, a Scott Turow novel that stood up and walked over to the nonfiction shelf."
—*Jonathan Kirsch, Los Angeles Times*

"America has found a new hero."*

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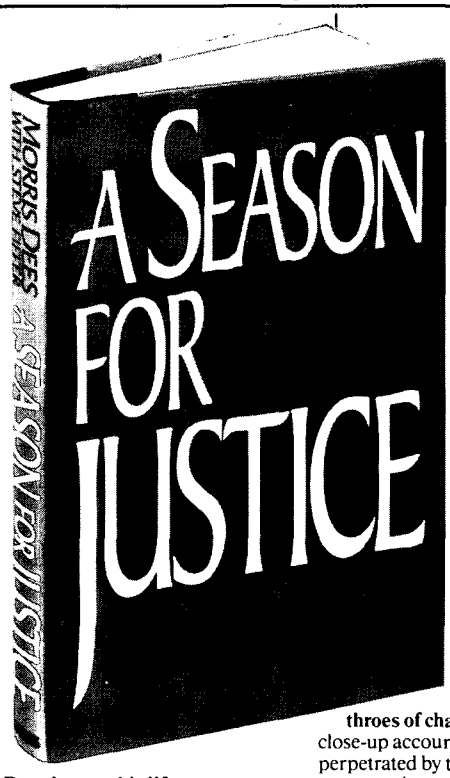

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— *San Francisco Chronicle*

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— *Rosa Parks*

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"When we say one man can make a difference, that man is Morris Dees. **What a difference he has made in the fight against the Klan and neo-Nazis!"**
— *Rabbi Marvin Hier, Dean Simon Wiesenthal Center*

A Book-of-the-Month Club Alternate Selection

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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*John Siegenthaler, The Tennessean
Photo by D Gorton

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Three, Number 9 September 1991

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Cover photo: courtesy of Gamma Liaison.

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LETTERS

Admissions denials

I was delighted to read John Larew's excellent article ["Why Are Droves of Unqualified, Unprepared Kids Getting Into Our Top Colleges?" June] on the neglected subject of college admissions. Ivy League and other elite schools are much less democratic about who does and doesn't get in than they would have us believe.

While Larew discussed the legacy preference, I think a bigger problem is favoritism to students who attend elite prep schools. Close to half the students at some colleges went to private schools—a far greater percentage than for the country as a whole. While admissions officers would undoubtedly claim that this is because many private schools offer a better education and produce more qualified graduates, one suspects the real reason is that most prep school students are the children of wealthy parents. By admitting them, colleges benefit immediately by not having to offer financial aid and in the long run by increasing alumni donations. No self-respecting college would be so crass as to favor the rich openly in its admissions policy, so they accomplish the same thing indirectly by favoring students from schools only the rich can afford.

JACK KAPLAN
Hamden, Connecticut

John Larew's article made a number of errors, omissions, and incorrect assumptions unworthy of your publication.

1) It has been a long-standing policy to admit alumni children when all other factors are substantially equal. However, this policy does not guarantee admission to the children of alumni (indeed the majority are not admitted), nor does it lead to the admission of those who are not well qualified. Alumni children at Harvard (as noted in the federal study he cited) averaged 674 on the verbal SAT and 695 on the math, scores that place them in the 94th percentile nationally. Average combined SAT scores for alumni children in this fall's class differ by only 10 points (on a scale of 1600) from those of the total class, well below the standard error of measurement for the SAT. Far from being "unqualified," our alumni children are among the strongest students in the country.

2) Larew asserts: "For more than 40 years, an astounding one fifth of Harvard's students" have received alumni consideration. This is incorrect. The class entering in 1966 was composed of 19 percent alumni children. In 1971 that percentage was 15. During the past two years it averaged 13.

3) Children of alumni who apply to Harvard, despite Larew's implication to the contrary, have higher average test scores than the average applicant. Therefore, if we admitted students strictly on test scores alone (which we do not), one would expect a higher than average admission rate for alumni children. Larew mentions admission rates for alumni children and concludes that 200 of them were "marginally qualified." This claim, too, is at variance with the facts. Our alumni children have outstanding scores and other admission credentials.

4) Larew states that alumni children were "significantly less qualified" than other students using "admission office ratings on academics, extracurriculars, personal qualities, recommendations, and other categories . . . with the exception of the athletic rating. . . ." What Larew did not report is that the differences averaged only 0.2 of a point or less on 5 or 6 point scales, a difference that would do little to separate one candidate from another.

Far from hindering access to a Harvard education, our policies regarding the children of alumni have made it possible to admit the best students from every segment of society, regardless of their family financial circumstances. Alumni have provided 90 percent of the $30 million in scholarships that will be granted to undergraduates this year. Seventy percent of our freshmen this fall will have received financial aid, and 45 percent of the class will hold direct scholarship grants from Harvard. Included in this year's class will be record numbers of minority students and women.

After a careful study lasting over two years, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights concluded that this admissions policy serves "legitimate institutional goals" and "that there are no alternatives to these preferences that could effectively accomplish the same legitimate goals."

WILLIAM R. FITZSIMMONS
MARLYN McGRATH LEWIS
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mr. Fitzsimmons is Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid and Ms. McGrath Lewis is Director of Admissions at Harvard College.

The author replies:

I believe that alumni children accepted at Harvard generally meet the school's definition of "qualified," which is, to quote Fitzsimmons himself, "capable of doing the work . . . without serious risk of academic failure." However, as one former Harvard admissions officer advised me, "You, as a Harvard student, should know that just about anyone, with some judicious course selection, can make it through." The question I raised was not whether admitted legacies are minimally competent, but how they stack up against non-legacies—a question the outraged critics of minority preferences somehow overlook. The answer is that they are significantly less qualified. Would legacies be admitted at a higher than usual rate even in an "alumni-blind" process? Probably. Fitzsimmons estimated that 20 to 25 percent would be accepted, compared to 15 percent or so for all applicants. Given that 35 to 40 percent of legacies are actually admitted, as many as half of them, by the dean's own optimistic estimate, are unqualified by ordinary standards.

How unqualified are they? Fitzsimmons and McGrath Lewis insist that a 0.2 point difference is no big deal. First off, that's 0.2 points on a 4 point scale (not 5 or 6 as they assert), which amounts to 5 percent. (A score of 5 or 6 in these ratings is not comparable to a score of 1 to 4 because 5 and 6 are special codes that mean either "information not available" or "special case." I can't believe they tried to

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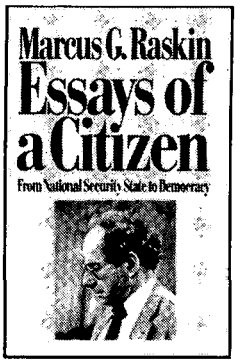

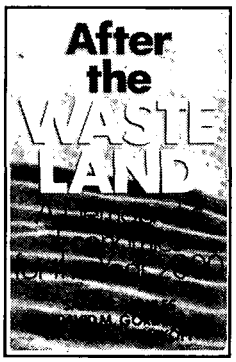

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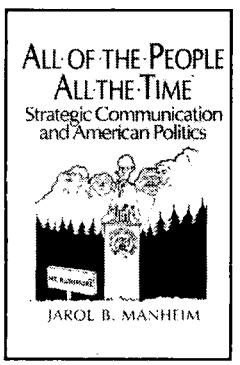

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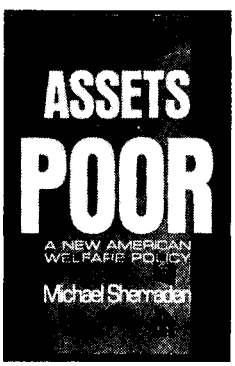

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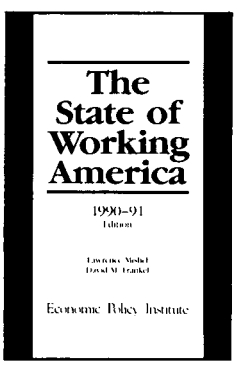

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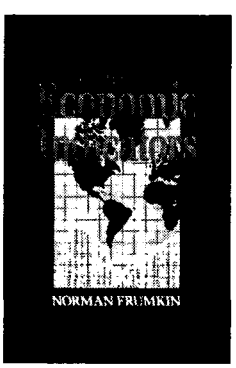

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pull that one.) The differences are statistically significant, which is a fancy way of saying they probably did not arise by random chance. Besides, the *average* difference between legacies and nonlegacies is not the most important statistic—you can drown in a lake that's an average of six inches deep. The real scandal is how low Harvard will sink in individual cases. According to the Department of Education, "It is evident . . . that being the son or daughter of an alumnus was the decisive factor" in many cases. Further, "it is clear that the 'lineage tip' can work to the advantage of an applicant by offsetting weaker credentials in virtually any of the ratings categories."

Whether or not admitted legacies are sought after by other colleges (and I suspect that most Harvard students can name at least one Harvard legacy who was rejected by every other school to which he or she applied), they are demonstrably not up to Harvard's ordinarily rigorous standards. That means that some less fortunate saps are rejected for no other reason than the accident of their births. How Harvard's spokesmen can argue that legacies "perform in outstanding ways throughout their undergraduate careers" is beyond me, because no one at Harvard has any solid evidence one way or the other. The last time Harvard investigated the matter (in 1956), it found that some legacies were indeed outstanding, but that the greater portion of them numbered among the worst students in the university.

As for the dispute over the proportion of legacies in each class, Fitzsimmons and McGrath Lewis have simply plucked a couple of unrepresentative years to make their case. The class of 1966, which they also cite, is more typical, and by my calculation, 19 percent is just about, uh, one fifth.

Community service

Katherine Boo's piece in the June issue ["What Mother Teresa Could Learn in a Leather Bar"] was absolutely superb and extremely important. Empowerment of communities to deal with problems is infinitely preferable to service delivery by bureaucrats and professionals. It applies to any social service—or, in fact, to any public service.

In Chicago, parents now have majority control over the schools. In a number of cities, community-oriented policing is transforming the police into organizers who help communities solve their own problems. In public housing, tenants are taking over their developments. In low-income housing, cities and states are pushing tenant cooperatives and other forms of tenant control. There are many stories to be told.

DAVID OSBORNE
Dedham, Massachusetts

The great white Hobe

With regard to your commentary in June's "Who's Who," I have no comment on the silliness of the item. Yet I would like to clarify that, as a former member of the Jupiter Island Club in Hobe Sound, Florida, I know that there are no exclusionary or restrictive covenants with regard to membership in the club.

JOSEPH REED
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:

Mr. Reed uses "are" with care. Until well after the practice was forbidden by the Supreme Court, the bylaws of the Jupiter Island Club, whose members included Reed, George Bush, and C. Boyden Gray, specifically excluded Jews.

Whose lion?

The central question of John Gill's article on the New York Public Library ["Bookshelves of the Vanities," June] is stated on its second page: "Why [do] neighborhood libraries struggle for survival while their parent institution sits on a heap of gold?" Unfortunately, that premise is simply wrong.

The library's endowment provides income sufficient to cover only 20 percent of the cost of operating the research libraries. In the fiscal year just ended, the Library Corporation will show an operating deficit of about $2.5 million. In 1989, the year referred to in your article, the library's audited financial statement showed an operating deficit of $410,000 in the research libraries—not, as you reported, "a $12.2 million excess over operating costs."

The current New York City fiscal crisis has increased the pressure on the operating budgets of both the research libraries and the branch libraries. Your article stated, incorrectly, that "whenever the city reduces its funding to NYPL, only the neighborhood branches—the traditional outposts of learning for the hoi polloi—are hit hard." Tell that to the librarians or the users in the Central Research Library, the Schomburg Center for Black Culture, and the Library for the Performing Arts, each of which stands to lose two full days of service under the current city cuts. Outside of the imaginary fiscal world dreamed up by your writer, a subsidy from our research libraries to our branch libraries means tearing down one set of services to try to protect another set. Both would lose.

Holding the City of New York to its historical contract to fund the daily operations of all the city's branch library systems is the only responsible course. The $17 million cut in our branch libraries would more than swallow up all the private fundraising we do to maintain current service levels in our research libraries. A working partnership between the private sector and the city is essential to maintain services to all users. That is why the trustees and the staff of this institution are fighting as hard as they can to roll back the city cuts.

TIMOTHY S. HEALY
New York, New York
Mr. Healy is president of the New York Public Library.

I would like to correct John Gill on a number of assumptions. When Vartan Gregorian was appointed president of the New York Public Library in 1981, his salary was $90,000; eight years later, it was $130,000. During his tenure, he took only 45 days of vacation. In addition, Gregorian forfeited two years of paid sabbatical from the University of Pennsylvania. The library had promised him a sabbatical after six years; instead, at the end of eight years, we decided to honor our commitment by giving him a

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After the Cold War

Alpo M. Rusi

Europe's New Political Architecture

The seismic changes of 1989 have called for new thinking about relations all over the globe: East-West, North-South, US-USSR. Finnish scholar and diplomat Alpo Rusi's study of the implications of the revolutions in the former communist bloc is grounded in George Kennan's theory that international relations are "organic" phenomena. But Rusi's distinctive perspective from a leading neutral country adds a critical twist that is lacking in observations from both East and West.

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year's salary in lieu of the sabbatical. The author, instead of citing Gregorian's annual salary figure, added the annual salary to the one-year sabbatical figure to arrive at the grandiose figure of $247,469.

I had thought that journalists were supposed to contact people about whom they write, but perhaps this is a new era of journalism and a new breed of journalists.

MARSHALL ROSE
New York, New York

Mr. Rose is chairman of the board of the New York Public Library.

The author replies:

As "grandiose" as President Gregorian's 1989 income of $247,469 may seem, it actually represents a *reduction* in grandeur from his earnings of the previous year. In 1988, without the help of any "one-year sabbatical" income, the nonprofit corporation's champion still managed to earn $263,158 (not counting a $37,000 contribution to his benefit package). According to the library's vice president for finance, this 1988 income included a grand $108,000 bonus.

Mr. Rose's neat distinctions between salary and other forms of income serve only to obscure the fact that all of these big numbers represent the same thing: skewed priorities for an institution that carries the word "public" in its name. At a time when the neighborhood branches had not fully recovered from the ravages of the seventies' financial crisis, the library's big-hearted board of trustees saw fit to pay one man more than half a million dollars over a two-year period. This is the same library that now pleads poverty when asked by the librarians' union to release endowment dollars to protect front-line public service jobs and keep neighborhood branch libraries open.

The library is a private corporation. If its excess monies are available for executive bonuses but untouchable for the preservation of public service when the branches are in crisis, perhaps the institution should be known as a "free" library rather than a "public" one.

School crazed

I appreciated "America: A Repair Guide" [Charles Peters and James Bennet, July/August]. However, credentialism is nothing new, though it may have become worse over the years.

Back in the sixties, I spent five years in the technical writing department of a Honeywell factory in Wabash, Indiana, having been promoted from draftsman. I did complete instruction sheets and manuals for everything produced at that factory; my material was published—but not edited—at company headquarters in Minneapolis. When the factory closed, I declined a transfer to Chicago and applied for technical writing positions at other companies in smaller midwestern towns. The first question invariably was, "Where did you go to school?" When I said I'd never been to college, there were no further questions. The fact that I'd been successfully doing tech writing and illustrating for five years was ignored; I didn't have the proper credentials.

The Washington Monthly

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One of the engineers from the Wabash factory *did* get a tech writing job somewhere else. The man could not produce a coherent sentence, but he had a degree.

I eventually took a factory job with the Overhead Door Co. and worked up to door designer before retiring and converting my writing to fiction, eventually selling nine novels. I'm currently a book and magazine reviewer. Freelance writing is one profession, at least, where skill counts more than credentials, but it may be the only one.

ROBERT COULSON
Hartford City, Indiana

The editor replies:

Sports and the performing arts are two other areas where skill alone can carry the day. But beyond them Mr. Coulson is right, and the republic is poorer because he is.

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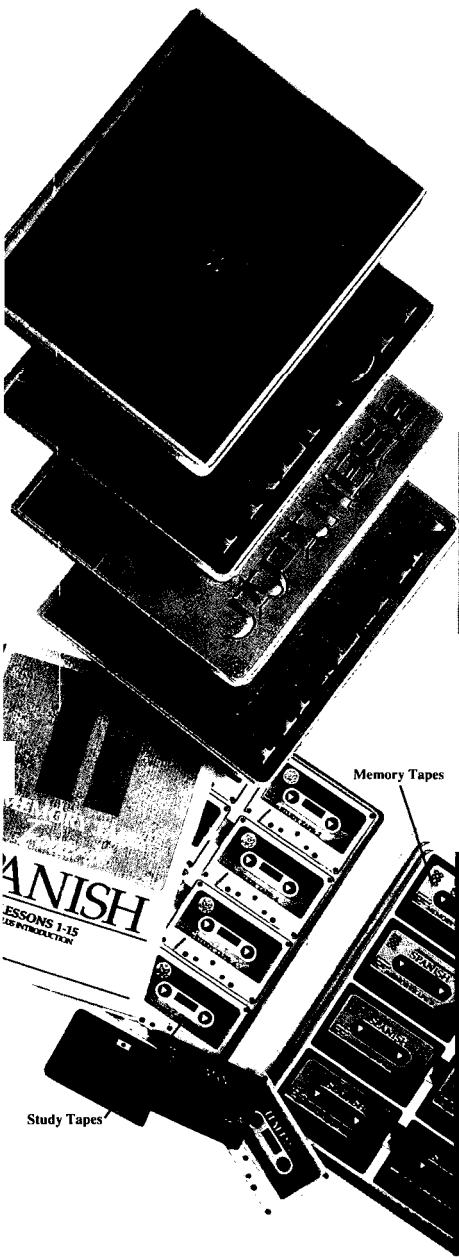

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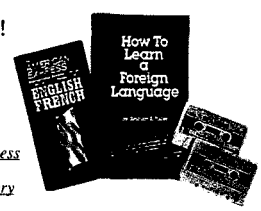

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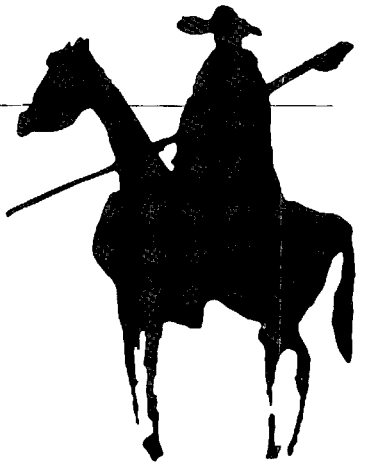

The "Corrections" box continues to be the most fascinating feature in *The New York Times*. Consider this example:

"An article last Sunday about women who received cosmetic makeovers in Macy's window misstated the marital status of Joseph M. Lerner, who accompanied Joyce Roman. He is married, not a widower. A picture caption misstated their relationship. He is a close friend, not her fiancé."

Imagine the dramatic scenes that were played out between the appearance of the original story and the correction. I am confident that Mr. Lerner and Ms. Roman were absolutely innocent, but if his spouse fell even a fraction of a millimeter below sainthood, one shudders to think about the domestic cross-examination to which he must have been subjected. . . .

As your kids pack up their Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle lunchboxes, your faith in the public schools must be fortified by this announcement from the *San Jose Mercury News*:

"Volunteers are sought to tutor Santa Clara County Office of Education employees in reading, writing, mathematics, and English." . . .

Why do men drive women crazy? One clue to the answer was supplied by the testimony of General Merrill A. McPeak before a Senate committee considering legislation that will permit women to fly in combat. After admitting that there are "at least some women who can do this combat job as well as men," the general continued: "So it's the law that's preventing us from doing this, and I find comfort in that."

McPeak went on to say that it was his "old-fashioned" preference to have men do the fighting rather than women, even when the women were more qualified. The general concluded by conceding that his view "doesn't make much sense.". . .

To understand how even conscientious government employees feel about telling Congress truths that could embarrass their superiors, you should dwell for a while on this statement by Alan D. Fiers, who recently pled guilty to withholding information from Congress about the Iran-contra affair.

"I could have been more forthcoming, but I frankly was not going to be the first person to step up and do that. . . . So long as others who knew the details as much as I—who knew more than I—were keeping their silence on this, I was going to keep my silence."

What this means is that institutional loyalties and identifications are more important to the executive branch employee than loyalty to the people of the United States, as represented by the people they have elected to Congress. . . .

In case you missed Jessica Lee's memo to her colleagues about her experience as a social guest of the president and Mrs. Bush, here's an excerpt from the *USA Today* White House correspondent's report:

"Going to a state dinner at the White House is unbelievably seductive. It was like being Cinderella at the prince's ball. Anyone who knows me knows I spent hours looking for the right dress. I found a sizzling hot Bob Mackie, but I decided I'd put it on ice for some truly social occasion. I wore a long, slinky black dress with silver accessories. . . . I chatted with the president and the first lady. He introduced me as 'one of our finest reporters.' . . . When it was over, my captain escorted me out with compliments on my looks and charisma."

The Washington Post's media watchdog, Howard Kurtz, asked Lee if she thought the experience might affect her coverage of the White House. Her reply:

"I'm not really sure that [Bush] gets anything out of it. . . . I thought of it as purely social, like any other social evening."

Jessica Lee may not be co-opted, but I have seen many of her colleagues who, although they tend to be more sophisticated and guarded in describing the experience, have been subtly seduced by it. In his book *Speaking Out,* Larry Speakes describes reporters literally begging for invitations to White House social events for themselves or their bosses. . . .

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That our president is all heart has never been better demonstrated than by this June 22 headline in *The New York Times*:

"Plan to Give Vaccines to Children Is Delayed for One Year by Bush."

If you want to know why the incidence of childhood diseases like measles has risen dramatically in recent years, it is because the Reagan-Bush "do anything for the rich and as little as you can get away with for the poor" administrations have failed to provide adequate funding for immunization programs. . . .

Soon after this magazine was founded in 1969, American industry began to lose the competitiveness race as both workers and managers were given pay increases without regard to increases in productivity. We repeatedly bemoaned the trend as it grew worse in the seventies.

In the early eighties, one part of the problem began to diminish when unions, partly as an act of enlightenment and partly as a result of their reduced power in the Reagan era, moderated their wage demands. Managers, on the other hand, grew greedier and greedier, paying themselves ever more extravagant salaries and bonuses, often with only an inverse relationship to productivity.

The result is that we are rapidly returning to the days of the exploited working class. As we have pointed out, society is stacking the deck against the workers in everything from federal taxes to real estate assessments to military service. Now along comes Thomas Geoghegan with a moving call for us to once again embrace the unions. I'm not so sure about the unions, for the reasons Paul Glastris gives in his review of Geoghegan's book in this issue, but I am sure that, to the extent the emotion of the book summons us once again to the cause of the working class, it is profoundly right. . . .

Speaking of unions, I sympathize with those PATCO workers who were fired by Reagan in 1981, because some of them, especially those serving at the busiest airports, were dangerously overworked at peak periods and because I think that, after five years or so, they had been punished enough for striking and should have been given a chance to get their jobs back. But they deserved no sympathy for their claims that they were underpaid. Today 66 percent of them are earning in private employment the same as or less than they were paid as air traffic controllers. . . .

I am indebted to "one acerbic economist," quoted by Michael Schrage of the the *Los Angeles Times*, for his observation about the American economy in the eighties: "We had a $200 billion industrial policy for shopping mall construction.". . .

James Fallows and I agree on practically everything, but I thought he was a tad too kind to P. J. O'Rourke in last month's review of O'Rourke's new book. Certainly, O'Rourke deserves an easier path through purgatory for his sense of humor alone. But in his opposition to "rich bashing" he is on the wrong side of what I believe will be the most important fairness issue of the nineties: the need to take back from the rich what they stole from the rest of us in the eighties. Surely you have seen the latest damning statistic: In the period between 1977 and 1988, the income of the top 1 percent rose 122 percent. The 1988 income of that top 1 percent was almost as large as the combined income of all the people in the bottom 40 percent. Contrast those figures with 1977, when the bottom 40 percent earned more than twice as much as the top 1 percent. . . .

If you doubted that our proposal to tax the churches would yield significant revenue, ponder the news that the income of the Mormon church is $4.7 billion a year. . . .

Lyndon Johnson always maintained he had nothing to do with his family's Austin TV station. But in his forthcoming book about LBJ, Joseph Califano tells this story, which was told to him by William Paley, the chairman of CBS:

"[F]or years, Johnson had pestered [Paley] to designate the Johnsons' Austin TV station a mandatory buy for advertisers who purchased network time. Paley had refused. At 6 a.m. Austin time on the morning after the 1954 elections, in which Democrats gained control of the Senate, Paley's private line rang in his New York City apartment. 'Bill,' Johnson said to the CBS chairman, 'you are talking to the next majority leader of the United States Senate, and I want that station to be a mandatory buy!' Paley acceded to Johnson's request.". . .

Top postal executives were rewarded with nearly $20 billion in bonuses between 1988 and 1990, when the post office not only was not making a profit, but was losing more than $1.4 billion. The rigorous standards used in evaluating the performance of these executives are suggested by the fact that, of all those who could have gotten bonuses, 97 percent received them.

How did the executives justify the bonuses? Here's the defense

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offered to *The Pittsburgh Press*, which broke the story, by Frank Brennan, a postal service spokesman in Washington:

"Hey, we saved $800 million off a projected $1.6 billion loss.". . .

For roughly half my life, the U.S. Post Office was a symbol of how government could work. It did deliver the mail—two or three times a day during the thirties and forties—and it remained reasonably efficient throughout the fifties, still charging only three cents for first-class letters. But performance began to decline in the late sixties, while costs escalated. So many packages were lost, delayed, or destroyed that demand for a more efficient alternative led to the founding and subsequent flourishing of the United Parcel Service. Special delivery became so unspecial that Federal Express found a ready market for *its* alternative. I have long suspected that the decline in quality of this most visible function of government has been even more a factor in the decline of faith in public institutions than Watergate and the other sexy scandals, especially for those over 40 who remember the good old days. . . .

In recent years the post office has been the league leader in at least two categories: long lines and indifferent clerks. But it appears to be getting stiff competition these days from the passport office. The scene as an applicant enters the one on K Street in downtown Washington was described recently in *The Washington Post*:

"The line snakes nearly to the door and only three clerks are on duty, one of mediocre talent and two who are even less skilled. That means it'll be a good two hours, he correctly estimated."

The article helps explain why the affluent can remain unruffled by such problems: The story is about a "stand-in-line-for-a-fee" service. Those who can afford it can pay to avoid the frustration bureaucracy inflicts on the average man.

Because they can afford Federal Express, which does for about 13 dollars what special delivery mail used to do for 13 cents, or a proxy stander-in-line, the affluent class that runs and staffs our major media may lack the motivation to reform the bureaucracy. This may be why they run so few articles on the subject. . . .

Another reason, I am convinced, is that they don't know *how* to reform the bureaucracy, because so few journalists have

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served in it and acquired firsthand knowledge of how and why things go wrong and of who and what should be blamed. And they don't even realize that they should know. A recent study sponsored by The Joan Shorenstein Barone Center at Harvard found only me arguing that experience working in the executive branch is a desirable qualification for journalists who plan to cover government. The other journalists interviewed in the survey seemed to feel that somehow knowledge of the inside would corrupt them.

Over the years, this has presented a considerable problem for the *Monthly*. Our colleagues in the press have not known whether to believe us when we publish articles like James Bennet's and Harry Crosby's in this issue.

I was once on a television panel show that briefly dealt with the conventional wisdom that federal employees were underpaid. My fellow panelists raised their eyebrows in polite disbelief—my friend Eleanor Clift had that alarmed "Is Charlie going to embarrass himself?" look—as I tried to explain that the usual view was wrong. Like the air traffic controllers, most federal employees were either adequately or excessively compensated, but for a different reason: because the standard by which their pay was determined involved comparing real jobs in the private sector with federal job descriptions, many of which exaggerated the importance of the civil service position and glorified its duties. . . .

New readers have a similar problem, unless they're current or former government employees—in which case they either hate us for revealing the confidence games of their trade or love us because they are idealists who believe the games should be exposed. But if, like the average journalist, the new reader hasn't been inside the government,

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he has to wonder whether our departures from the conventional wisdom are fantasy or the real inside skinny. . . .

Take Sharon Pratt Dixon, the new mayor of Washington. Last fall, we addressed an article about the District of Columbia's personnel problems directly to her [see Scott Shuger, "Memo to the New Mayor," November 1990]. But there have been few signs since then that she understood what we were trying to tell her. She is obviously an intelligent person, so I asked a mutual friend why our message hadn't registered. The friend said, "You have to understand, she's never been in the government. She doesn't know if you're dead right or dead wrong."

All this helps explain why I want to open up the civil service to a lot more short-term appointments, so that more citizens will get inside the bureaucracy, as I was fortunate enough to do for seven years, and have the chance to learn how government really works—and then let their friends, and perhaps even their fellow reporters, in on the secrets. I am, of course, not unmindful that an incidental consequence might be to improve the *Monthly*'s modest circulation. . . .

Speaking of people who ignore the *Monthly*'s wisdom, the American Medical Association is even more cavalier than our fellow journalists. After we published "Doctored Results" [Alexander Kippen, October 1990], revealing how AMA publications are exploited by the drug companies, the doctors didn't say, "We're sorry, we're going to do better." They said, "Who cares what you say, we're going to do more." If you doubt me, consider this July 17 report from the Associated Press:

"The American Medical Association has announced plans to publish single-topic medical reports sponsored by drug companies. The reports would include articles rejected by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and its specialty journals, transcripts of symposiums, and articles from other journals that a drug company might want to send to a larger audience." . . .

Speaking of our friends the doctors, the Department of Health and Human Services has at last acted to limit physicians' widespread practice of referring their Medicare and Medicaid patients to clinics and other health care facilities in which the physicians themselves have a financial interest and from which they will profit.

Unfortunately, the restrictions proposed by HHS are typical of the Bush administration's modest approach to the re-regulation desperately needed after the extreme laxity of the Reagan era: If the physicians own less than 40 percent of the business, they can still refer patients to it.

This, I can confidently assure you, will produce an explosive growth in enterprises in which a doctor's share will be 39.999999 percent. . . .

Another example of tough regulation comes from the West Virginia Department of Energy, which had assessed fines of $120,000 for environmental violations on a big mining contractor. It recently offered to settle for just 3 percent of the amount owed. . . .

To sample some even phonier regulation, take a good look at the Skin Cancer Foundation. It is supposed to evaluate sunscreen products, granting a seal of approval to those that are safe.

But what do the "evaluations" consist of? Certainly not the independent testing you would assume. All the foundation does is review test results submitted by the manufacturers. In other words, the manufacturers can control the tests and thus the results. . . .

Clarence Thomas says blacks should stop thinking of themselves as victims and start feeling responsible for their lives. His critics say blacks *are* victims and that society should help them. I think Thomas is right about the way blacks should think about themselves. I also think that his critics are right about how the rest of us should think about blacks and other minorities, or at least those of them who are being deprived of a fair chance in life. Self-pity does no one any good, but the rest of us should feel, if not pity, then empathy, for those who deserve our help. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

Carol Wilson Trueblood
1940-1991

Carol Trueblood was at my side from the moment I first thought of *The Washington Monthly* until the last week of her life. Everyone who worked at the *Monthly* knows she was absolutely indispensable. She would do anything for the cause, performing at one time or another every role on the magazine staff. Her dedication and enthusiasm and her sixth sense of what had to get done to keep the ship afloat are legendary to all who worked with her. Our debt to her is immense, as is our sense of loss. There will never be another Carol.

—C.P.

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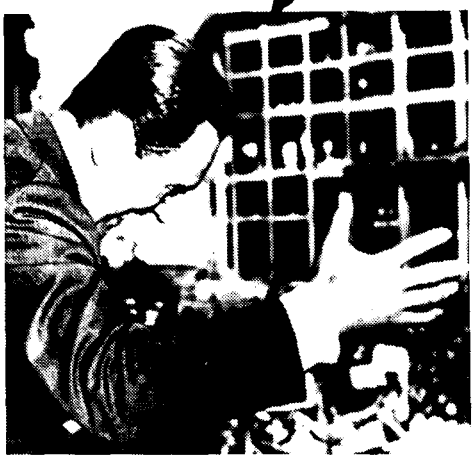

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WHO'S WHO

White House insiders are worried about **Boyden Gray**'s tendency to talk too much to *The Washington Post*'s **Bob Woodward**. . . .

Robert Mosbacher may be the front man for the 1992 Bush campaign, but, we're reliably informed, **Fred Malek**, **Robert Teeter**, and **Roger Ailes** will actually run it. . . .

Days before Manhattan District Attorney **Robert Morgenthau** announced indictments against BCCI principals and the Fed slapped the bank with a $200 million fine, Attorney General **Dick Thornburgh** complained to White House staff members that Senator **John Kerry** and Morgenthau were unfairly criticizing the Justice Department's slow investigation of the case. There are lots of things wrong that are not illegal, Thornburgh told the staff members. . . .

Which government officials will be long-term losers as a result of the BCCI scandal? Thornburgh, Treasury Secretary **Nicholas Brady**, and **Alan Greenspan** seem the likeliest candidates since each of their agencies should have acted against BCCI long before the scandal broke. . . .

So, who was the runner-up to Supreme Court nominee **Clarence Thomas**? Solicitor General **Kenneth Starr**. . . .

As suspected, **George Bush** and his aides were stunned by the confessions of a CIA man, **Alan Fiers**, who single-handedly awakened the investigation of special prosecutor **Lawrence Walsh** when he put National Security Council aide and CIA director-designate **Robert Gates**'s nomination in jeopardy. GOP conservatives who consider Gates their ally told the White House in late July that his nomination is doomed. . . .

Observers here are amazed at the courage displayed by Treasury Inspector General **Donald E. Kirkendall**. By referring the case of the two-month delay of the Silverado closing to the FBI, he has risked angering both Bush, whose 1988 campaign benefited from the delay that postponed disclosure of the closing and of **Neil Bush**'s involvement in the scandal until after the election, and Bush's close friend, Nicholas Brady. . . .

Where next for Defense Secretary **Dick Cheney**? The Senate. Homestate Republican Senator **Malcolm Wallop**, who has endured tough challenges the past two times, is considering retirement in 1994. Cheney would be assured an easy win. . . .

A House subcommittee's charge that the Environmental Protection Agency has suffered from "serious leadership failure" under **William Reilly** is backed up by EPA insiders who say Reilly has appeared to be concerned more with attaining cabinet status for his agency than with carrying out its mission. . . .

Rumors that **Paul Coverdell** was planning to resign to run for the Senate have not surprised or disturbed his colleagues at the Peace Corps. The director's 19 trips to his home state, Georgia, in a 15-month period had already aroused suspicion, since his agency is concerned with foreign, not domestic, affairs. . . .

Robert B. Strauss is being a prima donna, State Department insiders say, demanding 10 people instead of the customary 2 for his personal staff at the Moscow embassy. . . .

Why is **Robert Kimmitt** giving up the power he wields as one of **James Baker**'s inner circle to take *his* embassy position, in Bonn? Some say he simply wants a job that will allow him more time to be with his family. Others suggest that he wants to enhance his resume with the title of ambassador to Germany. But the real cynics say it's because Bush wants to get him away from Washington and the congressional committees that will be looking into the October surprise and Iran-contra. Similar considerations, the same cynics allege, led to **Donald Gregg**'s convenient exile to South Korea, where he is serving as an ambassador. Both men were working in the NSC under **Jimmy Carter** and could have been valuable sources for **William Casey** in the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign.

But other sources say if you want to figure out who in the NSC leaked to the Reagan-Bush people, consider the man who has benefited most, **William Odom**, a low-ranking colonel under Carter who was mysteriously selected as head of the powerful National Security Agency by **Ronald Reagan**.

Whether or not Casey actually tried to sabotage a possible October hostage surprise, it is almost certain, insiders say, that he would have felt he needed an NSC source to keep him informed of developments, and would have sought a Kimmitt or Gregg or Odom to fill that role. . . .

In—*Commerce*: Undersecretary for Export Administration—**Eric I. Garfinkel**. *Labor*: Assistant Secretary for Employment Standards—**Cari M. Dominguez**. Assistant Secretary for Labor-Management Standards—**Robert M. Guttman**. Assistant Secretary for Policy—**Nancy Risque Rohrbach**. *State*: Ambassador to Yemen—**Arthur Hayden Hughes**. Ambassador to Syria—**Christopher W. S. Ross**. Ambassador to the Philippines—**Frank G. Wisner**. *Transportation*: General Counsel—**Arthur J. Rothkopf**. *Treasury*: Assistant Secretary for International Affairs—**Olin L. Wethington**. *Agencies and Commissions*: Deputy Administrator, General Services Administration—**John Hiler**.

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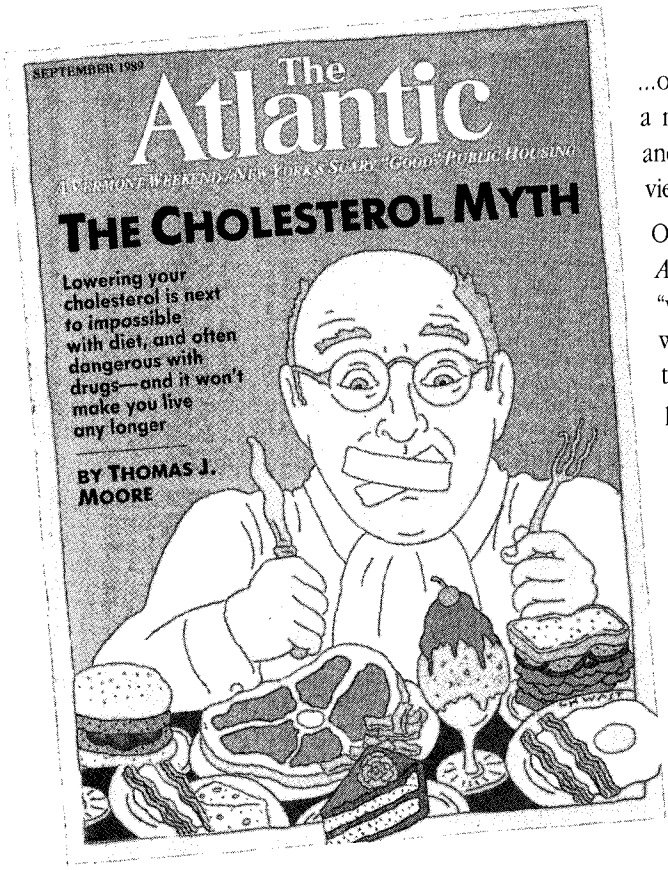

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Too At Home Abroad

Swilling beer, licking boots, and ignoring the natives with one of Jim Baker's finest

by Harry Crosby

If official Washington were an S&M club, the State Department would be strictly on the receiving end. Few public servants get so much abuse and so little respect—whether from the American public, the Congress, other executive branch bureaucrats, or even the president. Franklin Roosevelt reportedly once compared dealing with the Department to "watching an elephant become pregnant—everything's done on a very high level, there's a lot of commotion, and it takes 22 months for anything to happen." A generation later, John F. Kennedy would deride Foggy Bottom as a "bowl full of jelly" with "all those people who are constantly smiling." It's hardly surprising, then, that James Baker would continue his habit of relying on a few trusted aides, ignoring the State Department bureaucracy altogether.

Call me a masochist or a smiling idiot, but I joined the Foreign Service anyway. And like any good diplomat who expects to rise through the ranks, I can say that Roosevelt and Kennedy were both right and wrong. The State Department arguably attracts a higher proportion of bright, talented, and dedicated individuals than any other branch, department, or agency of the federal government. It's what happens to them once they join that justifiably sends the Department's critics around the bend. At its worst, the institutional culture of the Foreign Service can work like alchemy in reverse, turning the bright into the dull, the talented into the mediocre, and the dedicated into the merely employed. If Foggy Bottom wants to build up some measure of influence and respect, it's going to have to change the way it teaches its people to do business.

Every year, approximately 14,000 Americans take the written Foreign Service examination, a sort of super SAT that tests their grasp of U.S. history and culture, politics, economics, international relations, and English. (On my deathbed, I'll still remember that Zimbabwe is named after some stone ruins—one of the many questions I flubbed the first time I failed the test.) Of these 14,000 applicants, 2,500 will make the cut and move on to a numbing day-long oral examination, which some 600 to 650 will survive. Eventually, after a lengthy background check, anywhere from 150 to 200 will take the job.

The selection process produces an impressive group of recruits, especially on paper. According to the Bremer Report, one of two internal State Department studies done in 1989, 99 percent of all entrants have college degrees, and 67 percent have some sort of graduate degree as well. But a look behind the numbers shows why the entering classes aren't as good as they could be. If you were a smart, motivated college graduate pounding the pavement, would you wait 12 to 15 months to find out if you got a job that would probably pay you two thirds of what you might make elsewhere? Not likely, especially if you were a hot enough prospect to attract the attention of other top-flight employers. The Bremer Report cites the lengthy selection process as one reason why two out of three candidates offered jobs with the State Department turn them down. You can look at this in one of two ways: People willing to take a job after waiting for 15 months are either very dedicated or not very dynamic.

Cone heads

I had no reservations about the brain power of my classmates—few of whom, contrary to one still-popular stereotype—were Northeasterners or Ivy Leaguers. True to the Department's lingering reputation as a white boys' club, though, most of my fellow entrants were white males (37 percent were female, and the minority quotient was virtually nil). The class's average age was 28, a throwback to the average 10 years ago. (During the intervening decade, the average entrant's age had risen steadily to reach 32 in 1989.) We had a sizable contingent of ex-lawyers who moaned about the pay cuts they were taking and teachers who said exactly the opposite; the rest were

Harry Crosby is a pseudonym for a junior officer in the Foreign Service.

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from business, journalism, or fresh out of college or graduate school.

Why did we join? As one of our instructors loved to remind us, our results on a personality test taken in the first week of training showed that most of us matched the classic Foreign Service Officer (FSO) profile. While there were some would-be policy jocks, most of us—myself included—seemed drawn by the same things that attracted George Kennan some 65 years ago: "the frequent change of scene, the abundant intellectual stimuli, and the multitudinous glimpses the Service afforded into the lives of other peoples and the workings of governments." In a 1990 survey by the American Foreign Service Association, junior officers cited "the chance to travel" and "exposure to other cultures" as the two most rewarding aspects of the Foreign Service. "Public service" came in a respectable third, well ahead of "pay and benefits" and several other categories.

For all its attention to administrative detail and the Department's doings at home and abroad, our junior officer training stressed mindset over matter. Naturalist Konrad Lorenz would have been proud of the way we fell into the Department's traditional

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pecking order. All incoming officers were placed in one of four "cones" (consular, economic, political, and administrative), and one of the first questions out of every trainee's mouth was, "What cone are you?" "Political" was the answer that won the most points, and "consular" the fewest—in my limited experience the exact inverse of their practical value.

Political officers love to think of themselves as the Brahmins of the Service, the new Kennans looking down on the lower castes as they twirl globes and negotiate treaties. Truth is, in a world girdled by CNN and ruled increasingly by economic issues, political officers are steadily becoming less useful. But the white glove mentality lingers. The political cone is the largest in the Department, and political officers dominate its upper reaches. Is there any reason why the U.S. embassy in Japan, our biggest economic rival, should have far more political than economic officers? This political officer can't think of one.

More important than your cone is your rank—an inevitable obsession in a profession that rests so heavily on hierarchy and protocol. In day-to-day terms, observing the proper protocol toward the ambassador—keeping the correct side of the couch free for him or her, making introductions properly— can translate into behavior like drafting cables in only the way your immediate boss wants. That kind of thinking inevitably squelches dissent. One afternoon we were shown a television documentary about an officer whose aggressive human rights reporting displeased both his embassy and the Department. He was denied promotions and given dead-end jobs. Later, two former senior FSOs told their own tales of bucking the head office—in both cases their views were later vindicated, but not before their careers had suffered. The fact that both were still in their fifties and no longer with the Department wasn't lost on their audience. We new hires were getting exactly the wrong message. In a bureaucracy whose real worth rests on the integrity of its reporting, these people should have been presented as heroes, not victims.

Intentionally or not, our instructors and lecturers also gave us a heavy dose of the "us versus them" mentality that so often turns foreign policy into an interagency sandbox squabble. Each tale they told about the increasingly bitter feuds between State and other agencies seemed to end with us on the losing side. The moral of the story was clear: Whatever else Defense, Commerce, and Treasury might be, they weren't your friends. We also heard plenty about how the "new" Foreign Service wasn't as good as the "old," how today's officers were more "dependent," less willing to sacrifice, lacking in *esprit de corps*. I learned a lot in eight weeks of training. Besides "take chances, but be aware that you could ruin your career," two lessons stand out: Develop your own style, but always give your boss just what he wants; and have a sense of humor, but don't ever use it.

The golf crisis

The first brush that most of us had with the reality of Foreign Service life came during the assignment process. That's when you realize that you'll be spending your first tour as vice consul in Nuevo Laredo rather than as staff aide in Paris. Doing consular work makes junior officers better diplomats than playing step-and-fetch-it for some ambassador, but you'd have a hard time getting many non-consular officers to admit it. It's a field that most choose either to disparage or to ignore. In my first 10 months at a Third World visa mill, I saw my consul general—a worthy officer in many respects—enter the visa section just once. He was lost and couldn't find his way out of the building.

Consular officers do the dirty work of U.S. diplomacy. They perform tasks like issuing (or, more likely, denying) visas, cleaning up after plane crashes, and visiting U.S. citizens in foreign prisons. In many cases, they are the only U.S. government representatives foreigners ever encounter face to face, and they spend far more time talking with congressional staff, lawyers, and U.S. citizens than their average nonconsular counterparts. More often than not the work is as grueling and thankless as it is necessary. (If you don't believe me, try interviewing 2,700 visa applicants in one month, denying the bulk of them, and then saying, "Have a nice day.") Problem is, the Department's dismissive attitude toward its consular officers encourages FSOs to view their work as something to be endured and then forgotten. Look, for example, at the relatively small number of ambassadors who come from the consular cone.

Besides consular work, a junior officer also plays shepherd to official visitors, some more legitimate than others. As a fledgling "control officer," I once naively wondered why a bureaucrat whose agency didn't have anything to do with our country was coming to town. "End of the fiscal year," a colleague replied, rolling her eyes at the usual mad bureaucratic rush to spend what's left of annual travel funds. If you don't spend it this year, the logic goes, you won't get it the next.

An impending visit by one congressman paralyzed our post for weeks prior to the event. We even received a Night Action Immediate cable—the kind that calls for waking up the consul general (CG)— telling us that the congressman wanted golf on his schedule. A game was arranged. The congressman left happy, the CG later agonizing over how to handle the hefty check his wife had bounced at the consulate cashier.

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The attention lavished on congressional delegations still fell far short of that given to our ambassador, whose visits to the consular district were a cause for hand wringing and high anxiety. We spent two fifths of our travel funds—money intended for reporting trips or consular investigations—doing advance work for one of his visits. Even so, we were faulted for sins like failing to provide his wife with a footstool for getting in and out of her vehicle. The ambassador's position requires a degree of pomp and circumstance, but too often the Service seems to treat these people not as superior colleagues but as foreign dignitaries or demigods.

What's up, Dhaka?

Along with denying visas, taking care of visitors, and keeping the ambassador happy, reporting is the other major component of a junior officer's job. The problem with our reporting wasn't that it was massaged to death or that it sympathized with the host country's point of view. Our problem was that it usually relied on second-hand information. Out of roughly 30 Americans at my post, not a single one spoke the local language well enough to do more than take a taxi across town. Most of our reports were drafted, under our guidance, by Foreign Service Nationals, long-serving local staff who were storehouses of institutional knowledge and contacts. If we had anything to add, it came from the English-language press or from conversations with the relatively small, primarily urban, English-speaking portion of the population. Knowing the local language would have cut several months off the time it took me to recognize—and edit out—the cultural, racial, and political biases of our local reporting staff.

This is not as unusual as it should be. According to the Bremer Report, the percentage of language-designated positions in the State Department filled by qualified officers fell from 75 percent to 66 percent from 1987 to 1989. Moreover, roughly one third of those promoted to the Senior Foreign Service between 1986 and 1988 did not have the required proficiency in even one language. In a system that rotates personnel once every two to three years, some linguistic reliance on local staff is inevitable. But what if your local staff isn't reliable? Without an interpreter, not one American in the consulate could ask a rural villager how he was going to vote, much less figure out if the clerk sitting two desks away was selling visas over the telephone.

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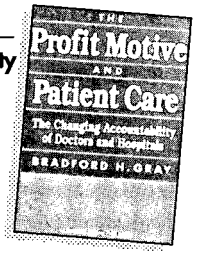

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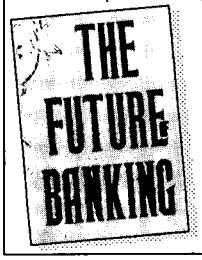

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Some of my FSO colleagues mixed and traveled and some didn't, but the last thing any of them could have been accused of was going native. The U.S. government would have saved a lot of money if they had. If you throw in allowances for housing, hardship, and other benefits, it easily costs Uncle Sam $200,000 above salary to keep an officer at some posts. My first week overseas, one colleague prefaced a dinner invitation by saying, "We *never* serve local food here." Just about everything he and his wife ate came from the commissary. When a family has to come to a country where you can't drink the water, shouldn't breathe the air, and might not like the food, a little coddling is necessary. But it's all too feasible in today's Foreign Service to shuttle between your comfortable apartment and your office, live on pizza and Bud, and watch *Home Alone* before bed, pretending all the while that you're in D.C. instead of Dhaka. The natives could be rioting in the street and you'd never know it, much less report on it.

Kissing behind, getting ahead

Most people join the Foreign Service to be diplomats, not bureaucrats. What's amazing, though, is how thoroughly the latter mentality takes hold. To give just one example, our consul general regularly encouraged us to hold more receptions and dinners for contacts. Why? In part because, as one of his memos began, "So far only X, Y, and Z have shown up on the embassy's screen for having utilized representational funds this fiscal year."

Most people also join the Foreign Service because it sells itself as a meritocratic elite. But while the good may rise, the Department's institutional culture ensures that the bad just stay there. All junior officers have roughly four years to achieve "tenure." If you pass muster, you're usually guaranteed a career. And according to the Bremer Report, 96 percent of those up for tenure get it—one reason why the Thomas Report (the other 1989 State Department study) says "the tenuring process as currently constituted serves no purpose."

Take the case of one inept FSO at my post. After just barely getting tenure, this person has stayed at the lowest rank for the past 10 years. I watched three of his supervisors try to write employee evaluation reports (EERs) that would keep him from promotion. Not one recommended firing him, primarily because each was folowing his predecessor's lead. Every officer sees his or her EER before its submission and has the chance to respond to it. I actually provided one of my supervisors with a working draft of mine. As the Bremer Report suggests, the toughest thing about the Foreign Service may be getting in: "In 1987, promotion boards referred only .004 percent of files reviewed to the Performance Standards Board. The number referred to the PSB has actually declined in each of the past three years, during which time not a single senior officer has been referred to the PSB." Now that you know how to survive as a junior officer, it's time to learn how to get ahead. Once upon a time, junior officers distinguished themselves by what they did in the field. As a 1970 Department publication put it, "Our ablest and most energetic officers literally seek out opportunities to report." Not anymore. Today's conventional wisdom is that promotions are faster in Foggy Bottom. As one career counselor told me, "The quickest way to the seventh floor is through the operations center and the secretariat." The ops center plays traffic cop, to put it simply, for all cables and phone calls—one ops center vet described himself to me as a "glorified receptionist." The secretariat functions as a gigantic in/out box for the secretary of state, controlling paper flow and making travel arrangements. As a junior officer, you're not really doing anything substantive in either job, but you're getting to know the high and mighty and, more important, they're getting to know you. ("Good man, Digby. Damn fine job with that briefcase and conference call.")

Working in the Department is important, of course, as is having some measure of bureaucratic skill. But the obsession with cultivating your superiors, in word or deed, points to one of the Foreign Service's biggest flaws. As a nameless ex-FSO once complained, "The trouble with most FSOs is that they are too concerned about being something or becoming something—being a deputy chief of mission or becoming an ambassador—and not enough with *doing* anything."

I like the people in the Foreign Service, and I don't worry when I think that one day my life may depend on one of my colleagues making the right decision. Moreover, critical internal reports like those by the Bremer and Thomas commissions are a cause for hope. But for the good of the Service and the country, Foggy Bottom has to stop kidding itself. Fundamentally, FSOs aren't losing their influence because of a lack of money or an abundance of bureaucratic competitors. They're losing it because their culture rewards people for saying what others want to hear, for putting bureaucracy before diplomacy, and for sucking up at home instead of buckling down in the field. Lamenting the lack of "adequate funding," one senior officer recently sent a cable saying, "Were we to achieve the recognition that you and I are convinced we deserve, junior officer program problems might largely resolve themselves." He's wrong. What the Foreign Service needs is a healthy dose of self-respect, and no congressional appropriation will ever be large enough to supply that. □

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Vanity Fare

By reaching for the stars, general interest magazines have stayed alive. Too bad they've lost a reason for living.

by Katherine Boo

In the April issue of *Esquire*, journalist Philip Weiss records, with a director's distance, his interview with actress Ellen Barkin. At the fade-in, Phil and Ellen are tête à tête in a New York restaurant, downing café con leche and wrestling over what this celebrity profile will be. Ellen wants to talk about sexism and cowardice in Hollywood and other, realer places. Phil wants to talk about Ellen's body.

When she resists—criticizing the studios, speculating on the emotional life of the waitress—Weiss can't control his impatience. He wants to know her secrets, not her politics. "While lots of things you say are long paragraphs—they're Ellen Barkin, social critic—I have to break this up for the reader," he advises her at one point. "I want a little narrative. I wanted you to tell me the story about what it was like wearing falsies."

Weiss's struggle to get the boob scoop from the actress makes a funny read about the mechanics of the celebrity interview. But it also illustrates a troubling relationship between substance and celebrity in today's general interest magazines. In pursuit of the reader in a cable-ready world, these magazines are increasingly the handmaiden to the very forms of media—TV and movies—that threaten to supplant them.

It's not that mythraking was invented by *Vanity Fair*'s Tina Brown. *Photoplay*, *Silver Screen*, and *Movie Mirror* were mesmerizing housewives and teenagers as soon as there were movies to hype. What *is* new is the celebrity encroachment on more earnest publishing ventures. In 1988, a "reformatted" *Time* added a "Critic's Choice" section on movies, TV, and music and doubled the size of a column called "People." *The New Yorker*, that redoubtable franchise, began adding mini-

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profiles of theater, music, and dance personalities to the squint-print nightlife listings at the front of the book. Even *The Washington Monthly* managed to devise a, uh, perfectly good reason for featuring Julia Roberts on its cover this spring. But no transformation has been quite as pronounced as that of the general interest magazine, a barometer, like phone surveys and focus groups, of American middle-class taste. "It's nutty," marvels Jesse Kornbluth, until recently one of *Vanity Fair*'s leading celebrity profilers, "but people today take their values from the media, and they relate to celebrities like their friends. When I talked to Kevin Costner, our conversation was about *how to live*. With Jodie Foster, it was the same deal. . . . Celebrity profiles carry a subtext, a code about morality." Celebrities, in other words, are the new lodestars of American values. Trouble is, journalistic values are paying the price.

Virtually all Hollywood profiles come in one of three packages. 1) He thinks he's a mess but he's not. 2) Lots of other people think he's a mess but he's not. 3) He actually is a mess—that's why we love him.

In 1950, fewer than a quarter of *Life*'s 52 weekly covers were devoted to Hollywood types. The others vivified such stuff as atomic warfare, the Korean front, Texas football, and children of poverty to an audience of 10 million people. Tinier *Esquire* hawked three celebrities on its cover in 1961, one—Joe Namath—in 1971, and none a decade later. What it did have were Mailer's politics, Talese's sociology, Galbraith's economics, and Nabokov's memoirs. While magazine covers are, first and foremost, a way to sell magazines, they're also a window into an editor's soul, a gauge of what point he's trying to make with his product. By the mid-eighties, the point most of the general interest covers were making was celebrity—minimal spin, maximum starpower. In the last year, *Esquire*'s gone 8 for 12 in the all-star game; *Vanity Fair*, the standard-bearer, is batting 1.000. When asked why so many celebrities, *Esquire* editor Terry McDonell protests, "I just came from a meeting where they told me I'm not doing *enough*."

Of course, you can't judge a general interest magazine by its cover. Buried in almost every issue of the slicks are pieces blessedly remote from the Hollywood ethic: In *Esquire*, Denis Johnson's powerful dispatch from Liberia; Ron Rosenbaum on the ethics of euthanasia in *Vanity Fair*. "We don't do that sappy profile stuff," says McDonell. "We use celebrities as fronts"—recognizable symbols employed to draw readers into more substantive pieces. This month, for example, he's hoping David Letterman will lure you into an essay on sentimentality in the nineties. Yet despite editors' protestations, the *Variety* virus has an uncanny way of infecting even noble endeavors. In August's *Vanity Fair*, the writer of a story on Daryl Gates, the L.A. police chief, manages to squeeze John Candy, Robert Stack, and *Robocop* Peter Weller into the second paragraph, Bob Hope into the fourth, and Tom Berenger into the seventh. (Rodney King, the victim, appears somewhere between Bob and Tom.)

What could be harmful about something as innocuous as celebrity? In an age when more young people "followed closely" the breakup of Donald and Ivana than the breakup of Drexel Burnham Lambert, more space spent on stars means less on everything else. And getting those celebrities sometimes requires the ceding of editorial independence, from dulling the hatchet to performing out-and-out PR. But even more disturbing than occasional ethical violations is the creeping tendency to level editorial aspirations, transforming even the esoteric into the easy. In a recent *Vanity Fair* interview with Vaclav Havel—a philosopher trying to erect a democracy on the ashes of a totalitarian state—writer Stephen Schiff pauses to press the leader about his thoughts on . . . celebrity.

"But wait a minute," says a skeptical Schiff at one point, driving for the truth. "Isn't Havel a little more celebrity crazy than he's willing to admit?" After much disclaimer, Havel finally breaks down. He likes celebrities. He wouldn't turn Mick Jagger away at the door.

Sure, most of us are susceptible to the celebrity seduction—of preferring Havel on Jagger to Havel on Yeltsin. In fact, that's the point. As the general interest magazine's own history demonstrates, great editing, like great leadership, consists in appealing to what's best in us, not in letting us wallow happily in the mush. Yet in an era of dismal ad sales and declining readership, such idealism appears to have gone the way of the *Saturday Review*. Last year, in a fit of boldness, Tina Brown awarded Mikhail Gorbachev her cover, displacing Ellen Barkin. Brown was rewarded with the worst selling issue in years. Unfortunately, she hasn't made that mistake again.

In another forum, Phil Weiss's piece might have been a clever bit of criticism, an obituary for the

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mass-market magazine in which serious work buffeted, even prevailed over, the idiosyncracies of the stars. But *Esquire* is a general interest magazine. Weiss doesn't just describe the conflict between politics and celebrity inherent in popular writing—he eventually chooses sides. Somehow, toward the end, the auteur finds himself writing the requisite wet kiss to the star.

"Ellen Barkin had been scared of herself, of who she was. When she faced it and got secure enough in it, she could make movies that made other people confront it, too." Coming away from the tangle, Weiss sums up the experience: He'll look at her differently on-screen—she's smart—but he'll "continue to admire her breasts."

Real to reel

In 1968, William Styron wrote eloquently in *Esquire* about his own "Silent Generation," grown up in the depression, horrified by World War II, wearied by Korea. "[W]e were the most mistrustful of power and the least nationalist of any generation that America has produced," Styron asserted. "And just as surely, whatever its defects may have been, it has been this generation's interminable experience with ruthless power and the loony fanaticism of the military mind that has by and large caused it to lend the most passionate support to the struggle to end war everywhere. We have that at least in our favor."

This May, *Newsweek*'s media critic, Jonathan Alter, chronicled another generation for *Esquire*—the "Nowhere Generation" of cynical twentysomethings who grew up after Vietnam. But this is 1991. Alter's political thesis is literally and figuratively wedged into a plug for a movie called *True Colors*. A bad movie.

"We'd been talking about doing a piece wrapped around the movie, but the movie wasn't very good," says Alter. "And the question became, should I do an article on the movie anyway?" The answer, explains Terry McDonell, was yes. James Spader and John Cusack, the stars, were available for interviews, and their faces would sell the cover. "The movie has problems," Alter wrote, before noting that "Cusack, 25, and Spader, 31, deliver the quality work that is turning both of them into big stars."

"It ended up being a strange piece," says Alter. "I'm ambivalent about it." That's understandable. The Alter piece illustrates a critical difference between the general interest magazine of '68 and of '91: the debasing of real life, the inflation of life on the reel. "When you read the news, so much of it doesn't really touch your life," observes Jesse Kornbluth, himself ambivalent about the celebrity phenomenon. "I mean, do you understand this BCCI scandal? I don't. But for better or worse, people feel celebrities *can* touch their lives."

A long time ago, before Tina Brown was ever born, Henry Luce grasped the exploitative potential of the celebrity—second on his scale only to photos of corpses, executions, and other necrobilia. The first issue of *Life*, in 1936, pictured Greta Garbo and Helen Hayes inside. But Luce's ego resisted editing to the lowest common denominator, so he chose Margaret Bourke-White's photo of Fort Peck Dam—in Montana, of all places—for that first cover. He had the best-selling debut in history. While he continued to tap unapologetically into Hollywood for titillation—Janet Leigh, Grace Kelly, and Eva Gabor were fifties constants—his covers formed a pastiche of critical moments in American life: Korea, Sputnik, the Kennedys, Castro, the H-bomb, Vietnam, the urban racial crisis. When Winston Churchill peddled his war memoirs, Luce was first in line.

Yet *Life* was no mere compendium. Amid the mass quantities of Americana between its covers were regular glimpses of the editor's simple anticommunist cosmology. For his preachiness Luce took his share of heat. "They accept their own righteousness before the Lord too comfortably to be successful apostles," sniffed *The New Republic* about *Life*'s editors in 1953. But even this didacticism had an up side. While Luce's passion couldn't convince six million middle-class readers to *like* Chiang Kai-shek, it could help determine what those readers would have passionate opinions about.

If Luce was careful about the limbs he crawled out on, others took greater risks. At the height of Vietnam, *Esquire*'s Harold Hayes gave Michael Herr license to draft the seminal antiwar piece, *Dispatches*, in his pages. He commissioned Gore Vidal to make Ralph Nader, his eccentricities and his drive, palpable to tens of thousands of 22-year-olds to whom he might otherwise have been nothing but a name. In the long, hot summer of '69, he printed a sympathetic portrait of a wizard of the KKK.

Like Luce, Hayes was keenly conscious of the market. "Commerce made us dance," he once wrote. "Sharper ideas, impertinence or sauciness . . . whatever [is] necessary to get attention so that the service then could do its work." But the "service," strange term, occasionally seemed real. Besides the ubiquitous celebrations of madonnas and whores, theme issues focused on such unlibidinous topics as black separatism, leaps in reproductive technology, and the death of American avant-garde theater (a gleeful obituary). Celebrity? Talese took on Sinatra and lesser mortals; Helen Lawrenson savaged that nice, nice Julie Andrews. But under the heading "Personalities"

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in a 1971 *Esquire*, there's simply Dean Acheson's memoir of Harry S Truman. That sort of editing wasn't premised on giving readers purely what they clamored for. It was about offering them something they didn't know—yet—they should care about. With the right writer and enough vigor, they would care. And that—not deft prose, not acid analysis—was the real power of the general interest magazine.

This winter, when confronted with Desert Storm—the first war many of its readers had ever seen, an experience that a great editor might've leapt on to engage the young—not a single general interest magazine editor dared displace a celebrity to put the conflict squarely on the cover. Instead, John Sack's excellent reporting from Saudi Arabia in the April *Esquire* was billed second to Phil Weiss and Ellen Barkin. Despite state-of-the-art technology for cutting the lag time between production and publication, *Vanity Fair*'s March cover featured actress Shirley MacLaine, gossip columnist Taki, and Hollywood mogul David Geffen—and no Gulf war reporting at all. In April, the cover was Madonna, but several stories inside addressed the subject of the Middle East. In addition to a fine investigative piece on the assassination of Yasser Arafat's second in command, there was a celebration of the wartime ascent of CNN, a profile of "The Texas Buccaneer Who's Poised To Be a Major Player in Iraq," and a piece on King Fahd and his playboy scions. One of the royal princes goes to New York for urine baths, we learn; many of the royal princesses are porky.

What happened? Demographers tell us the profile of mass-market readers is the same as it was in 1950: young, most without college degrees, with a median household income now at about $35,000. But thanks to TV, far fewer of them are reading. Between 1975 and 1990, *Esquire*'s audience shrank from 1.2 million to 750,000. *Life*, which once sold 10 million copies a week, averaged only two million (and dwindling) this year—one seventh of the circulation of *TV Guide*.

Part of the problem, of course, is TV. But there's an enemy within the print medium, too: New technology has made putting out a magazine easier than ever. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of magazines on American newsstands doubled; there were 500 new ones last year alone, from *Crochet Celebrations* to the bawdy *Outlaw Biker*. Market research told publishers that they had approximately two and a half seconds to convince the newsstand browser or lose him altogether. General interest magazines found themselves, more often than not, losing. And Lucian self-confidence gave way to economic terror.

The mass-market magazines could ride the vector and specialize. They could die a slow death, like the *Saturday Evening Post*. Or they could change their roles altogether. In editors' minds, an idea simmered: Could Hollywood, the competition, be a catalyst, too? Perhaps, instead of shaping mass taste, a general interest magazine could reflect it—or rather, reflect those reflections, movies and TV. If that sounded like Plato, it would read more like *People*, which had emerged from the seventies as the decade's most successful new magazine.

People's managing editor, Richard Stolley, once codified his strategy for reaching the restless with his covers. "Young is better than old, pretty is better than ugly, TV is better than music, music is better than movies, movies are better than sports, anything is better than politics." Today, movies have moved up in the rankings while TV has slipped, but as readership dwindles and ad revenue dries up, Stolley's Law has become the general interest magazine's mantra. "In a way, it's kind of comforting," says an editor now. "You can be brain dead and sell 100,000 copies of an issue with Cher." And in fact, you'd probably want to be. Because to get Cher on the cover, you may have to do some pretty sleazy things.

Make nice with Nazis

Editors peddling a general interest magazine in today's market deserve merit badges just for surviving. Unfortunately, there's an ethical price for the celebrity dependence that has allowed them to stay alive. As demand for saleable stars exceeds the supply—hot actors have dozens of choices, from *Esquire* to *Forbes* to *The New York Times Magazine*—access, once a given for the big magazines, has become a drawn-out series of negotiations and written agreements. And the bottom line is often quid pro quo.

"It's a little nauseous-making," says Peter Kaplan, a former editor at *Esquire* and *Smart*, a magazine that by policy was to have a beautiful, famous woman on every cover. "If you do something nasty about a celebrity, you won't lose ads, you'll lose something even more crucial—the cooperation of a small, closed, almost monopolistic industry. And you need movie stars. So you're trapped."

How trapped? Charles Fleming, a writer for *Weekly Variety*, describes reporting a piece on Arnold Scwarzenegger for *Time* last year. Before Schwarzenegger would agree to the interview, *Time* higher-ups had to agree not to ask him about: a recent, unflattering unauthorized biography; his past steroid use; his friendship with Kurt Waldheim; and his dad's relationship to the Nazi party. And there was one thing they *had* to grill him about mercilessly: his appointment to the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

Most publicists don't need to issue contracts to cover such arrangements. Among the Hollywood

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press, a more informal arrangement obtains. While being interviewed over a long period of time by a prominent writer, a producer occasionally excused himself for "coke breaks," making little effort to disguise his departures. In any other setting—a federal office, a corporate boardroom, the locker room of the University of Texas—it might have been an act of foolish, even fatal, bravado. In Hollywood, it was safe. While the writer had no doubt that the producer, entrusted with tens of millions of dollars, was carrying around a serious addiction, all indications of it were left out of the story. The writer's editor, when questioned about it, defends the decision. "What you don't understand," he explains patiently, "is that movie star writing is partly glamour writing. You become conspirators in the dream."

How widespread is the conspiracy? Consider this memo, intercepted by *Spy*, from Tina Brown to Creative Artists Agency chief Mike Ovitz, the most powerful agent in Hollywood:

> Right now, the most hackneyed prevailing perception of you is as a "packager," a term which has a connotation of crassness that has little to do with what you actually achieve on a daily basis. It seems to me that a better term for your role in the life of Hollywood would be a *catalyst*: activating creativity by a gifted sense of talent, material, timing, and taste; plus, of course, extraordinary business acumen in putting it all together. Probably no one since Thalberg has seeded so many creative partnerships or brought so many movies to the screen.

And so on.

What could possess Tina Brown, editor of one of the most successful magazines in the business, to compromise herself so plainly? *Vanity Fair* depends on newsstand buyers for more than a third of its sales, making celebrity covers seem essential. And Tom Cruise, Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams, and Cher are just the sleekest of the hundreds of horses in Ovitz's stable. In the past two years, more than a third of *Vanity Fair*'s covers featured CAA stars. Which may or may not explain why last month, in a story about the furor over the allegedly homophobic movie *Basic Instinct*, Ovitz appeared briefly but heroically in an article critical of his archenemy, screenwriter Joe Eszterhas.

Brown grew up in the British equivalent of Hollywood; her father made movies. She knows how the game works. "I tend to feel that you can't take on the world," she once told *Newsweek*. "It's much better to try and make alliances with the people who affect your destiny." Such amiability has clearly paid off.

Ladies who launch

When Frank Crowninshield's legendary *Vanity Fair* was exhumed in the early eighties, it was envisioned as an irreverent literary enterprise in competition with *The New Yorker*; its covers featured such postdebs as Francine Du Plessix Gray. Within a year, it had crashed mightily on the newsstand. Enter Brown, whose first issue featured a blindfolded Daryl Hannah in a tight red dress, a profile of rehabilitated Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards and his model-wife, and advice from famous people on how to read *The New York Times*.

"I hated that story," Dominick Dunne later said of the Daryl Hannah piece, which, as it happened, he wrote. "Incredibly superficial." But superficial was more or less the point. While there are brave exceptions, most journalists who want to be in the slicks agree to play by a specific set of rules. Simple rules: Daryl Hannah's got a new movie, and you're a cog in the rave machine. "It's like the pool coverage during the war," says Kim Masters, a former magazine writer who now covers Hollywood from the outback of the *The Washington Post*, "only there's no war."

"There's almost no institutional support for truthful journalistic pieces anymore," says another Hollywood-based writer. "Instead of saying, 'We stand by our reporter,' your editor's negotiating with the agents, saying, 'We'll give you a puff piece. Take your choice of writer.'"

How does that dynamic affect what gets written? Examine the cover profile of a neurotic, intensely self-critical Michelle Pfeiffer that ran last December in *Esquire* as the movie *Russia House* opened. The author, the usually acid-penned *Washington Post* critic Hal Hinson, finds himself suspending disbelief. The actress's one-day walk-off from the set is portrayed as a personal epiphany, and veteran director Robert Towne's vital summary of his dealings with the actress—"Of all the actresses I have worked with in Hollywood, going back a lot of years, to my earliest days, Michelle was the most difficult"—is tucked parenthetically into the middle of the story. Granted, astute analysis of what Michelle Pfeiffer is *really* like is probably not a priority of nineties journalism. But Hinson's conclusion, "I left her house thinking that the only thing wrong with Michelle Pfeiffer is Michelle Pfeiffer," has the ring, not of journalism, but of shilling. The cover type: "What does Michelle Pfeiffer need? Absolutely nothing." (Not to be confused with February's Ted Turner/Jane Fonda headline: "Some Couples Are a Perfect Match.")

"You carefully place your hatchet jobs," acknowledges one writer. "You have to." The result is that virtually all Hollywood profiles come in one of three

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packages. 1) He thinks he's a mess but he's not. 2) Lots of other people think he's a mess but he's not. 3) He actually is a mess—that's why we love him. The writer who expects editorial support for writing category 4—he's a mess and should probably be sent to Hazelden for rehab before he does any more damage to decent people—would do well to consider the case of writer Lynn Hirschberg, who drew a tough portrait of *Beverly Hills Cop* producer Don Simpson for *Esquire* in 1985.

Hirschberg's piece, the accuracy of which was never disputed, prompted Simpson's publicist, Peggy Siegal, to blacklist Hirschberg, barring her from screenings involving Siegal's other clients. Did editors rally 'round the writer in the name of journalistic integrity? Not exactly. Three years later, *Esquire* named Siegal one of its annual "Women We Love."

Is such sycophancy necessary? Post-blacklist, Hirschberg's been relegated to interviewing substars like Madonna. And there are a dozen other cases of writers who burned their bridges in Hollywood only to find agents rebuilding them six months later. Yet these heartening stories are not the ones editors invoke when talking candidly about the Hollywood hitch. It's the blackball that sticks in the mind—a perceived powerlessness that justifies future grovelling. In this year's "Women We Love," tucked between Jamie Lee Curtis in fishnet and Daryl Hannah in pasties, is an insurance policy taken out by the editors of *Esquire*: a group portrait of the female staff of LA's International Creative Management agency, women charged with packaging hundreds of future stars. McDonell insists the purpose was not artfulness, but art: "I stand by the picture," he says.

Rainforest crunch

The Hollywood press pack makes a fine case study in source journalism run amok; by comparison, the White House press corps looks like an investigative team from the *Village Voice*. But general interest editors seem oddly equable about the compromise. One Roseanne gets you a rainforest, as one editor puts it. "It's a bargain, if you ask me," says another. "It buys you the ability to do uninfected—if you will—editorial. It allows you to do great work in between."

The spoilsport exegete might consider the in-between of, say, the August *Esquire*, with its requisite celebrity—Jennifer Connelly, star of three weak movies—on the cover. After flipping past the usual columns, he'll find three articles within. One is the almost wordless, 30-page "Women We Love" spread, featuring actresses, rock stars, agents, and a handful of real people. Number two is a humor piece written, presumably with help, by a child star of the seventies, the Partridge Family's prodigal Danny Bonaduce. And last, there's a piece in *Esquire*'s ancient journalistic tradition. Elizabeth Kaye's Palm Beach reportage on the Kennedys is all that separates this *Esquire* from *People*. Or does it? The subject *is* the Kennedys.

The overly hopeful might suggest that, by renouncing real life for celebrity spreads, today's American mass-market editors are writing themselves a ticket to obsolescence, as the stars to which they've hitched their wagons fade. Network TV viewing is declining, as cable fractures the medium into a thousand unreflecting pieces. With the rise of the VCR, mass moviegoing—despite the slicks' relentless cross-pollination—has stagnated. Perhaps, as those dominant media continue to splinter, diminishing the power of the mass-market icon, some editor might try to expand the horizons of the general interest magazine again, bringing middle-class readers more reality, less dream. "I think things are changing," says McDonell, heartened by the fact that earlier this year a George Bush cover sold almost as well as Ellen Barkin. The economic forces, he suggests, may finally be coming around.

But should economics be the only spur? The question brings us back to Phil Weiss. A contributing editor at *Harper's* and a former editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review,* Weiss doesn't usually do movie stars; he occasionally even writes for magazines like *The Washington Monthly*. One subject, several years back, was *New York Times* reporter-turned-investment banker Steven Rattner, who traded his $50,000 salary for more than $1 million, uneasily abdicating his idealism in the process. "What's troubling about Rattner," Weiss concludes, "is that in recognizing that no profession is inherently moral, he also seems to have given up on the idea that *individuals* should strive to be useful to society."

The same, of course, might be said of the editors of general interest magazines. As more and more middle-class people disengage from politics, public schools, the deficit, and a hundred other aspects of real life, might mass-market print leaders try a little harder to help us face America's problems instead of serving up another paean to Kevin Costner? Might they *strive* to find some middle ground between selling and selling out?

I called a veteran editor at one of the slicks, who is frustrated by the narrowness of the enterprise, the emptiness of his professional life. I wanted to ask his opinion. He called back a few days later, from L.A. "Sorry it took so long," he said cheerfully. "I've been talking to some folks about a movie." □

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Bloat People

Incompetents, slouchers, and sodomizers take heart. In Mayor Dixon's vaunted downsizing, your number probably won't come up.

by James Bennet

Oh, that terrain! The bloody, maddening uncanniness of it! When the hideous Battle of Dak To ended at the top of Hill 875, we announced that 4,000 of them had been killed; it had been the purest slaughter, our losses were bad, but clearly it was another American victory. But when the top of the hill was reached, the number of NVA found was four. Four. Of course more died, hundreds more, but the corpses kicked and counted and photographed and buried numbered four. Where, Colonel? And how, and why? Spooky. Everything up there was spooky. . . .

—Michael Herr, *Dispatches*

It's a bitter political irony that liberal Democrats like Sharon Pratt Dixon are the first leaders since the election of Ronald Reagan (under whom the federal workforce grew more than seven percent) to really grapple with the hard business of laying off public workers. But given the budget gridlock this summer, stretching from Maine to California, other officials probably won't be far behind. Which is why the model Dixon is forging is so alarming. As she tries to "downsize" her government, she isn't pausing to distinguish the civilians from the water buffalo from the real enemy.

Last fall, Dixon bravely campaigned on a promise to "cut 2,000 mid-management-level paper pushers from the government payrolls." The pundits thought she'd get creamed. Then they thought she wouldn't deliver. Now, less than a year later, she's poised to make good—or, sadly, to make mediocre. It's impossible to tell which workers will get the pink slips, but the mayor's firing strategy is likely to bring no lasting reform to the D.C. personnel system and, worse, no lasting reform to the D.C. government. Political compromises with

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the city council and fear of the civil service process have driven Dixon to adopt a firing strategy that counts only bodies, not brains or performance. Furthermore, her plan can affect barely one in 10 workers—and even among them, it's more likely to be demoralizing than motivating. In the end, as a trip through one D.C. agency shows, the mayor's plan will do nothing to wipe out the real enemies of District residents.

The fundamental problem lies with what is touted as the chief virtue of the mayor's plan: "We are not targeting people, but positions," Lorraine Green, head of the Office of Personnel, explained to reporters. As a matter of policy, an employee's skills or dedication can't be considered, only his job description—essentially the same approach that Mayor David Dinkins is using in New York City. This approach got a stern editorial endorsement from that good-government gadfly, *The Washington Post*: "No administration, even one with the best intentions, should be given an open license to target individuals, to decide *who* should be let go rather than *which jobs* should be abolished."

Roll that one around in your brain, and then recall the time you were standing in line to get your license renewed, listening to two city workers chat while another three did all the work. Wouldn't you want to choose which of the five got the boot? Or consider this: If a manager has two "nonessential" employees working under him who are to be, in the New York parlance, "excessed," that means he's been wasting, say, $80,000 per year—as surely as if he were taking that public money and blowing it on live entertainment for his Friday afternoon meetings or on a Lamborghini for the staff. Maybe that manager's position is essential, but he sure isn't. Shouldn't he be shown the door? No, explains the *Post*, patiently, "The payroll bloat is the emergency, and the elimination of 2,000 employees is the immediate priority." That is, the deficit is the enemy, and counting to 2,000 positions, regardless of the quality of the people who fill them, is the goal. Any resulting improvement in dismal government services—any progress against the real enemy—will be pure serendipity: "Some deadwood will surely be cleared in this process, and that is good."

Homeless alone

Kevin E. could tell you a few stories about D.C.'s deadwood. In 1979, at the age of ten days, he entered the District's foster care system, a world run by bureaucrats who apparently love children so much that through assorted tricks (like losing paperwork and classifying tots as prepared for "independent living") they manage to hold onto them, as the kids learn in limbo to walk and talk and think, for as long as 11 years. According to court documents filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, Kevin was returned to his mother at one point, but she abused him, so back he went to foster care. Two years later, thanks to a paperwork lapse, he was shipped back to his mother again—then, after being neglected and possibly abused, back to foster care one month later. By 1986, the Department of Human Services had settled on a great goal for Kevin: Have him adopted. But his caseworkers never tried to do so—even though two families, according to court testimony, expressed an interest. Under the supervision of at least 17 different caseworkers, Kevin has bounced from hospitals to group homes to foster homes to mental institutions. Rather than find him a family, the department finally came up with another way to comfort this needy little boy: powerful psychotropic drugs.

Then there's the deadwood at D.C.'s notorious ambulance service, still amazing after all these years. This spring, no D.C. ambulance was available to help an old friend of the mayor's when she went into cardiac arrest during an asthma attack. It took 29 minutes for a Montgomery County ambulance to reach her. She died. One woman whose husband had a heart attack recalled that, after waiting for the ambulance to arrive, she then had to wait again for the driver to find his keys. To cut its emergency response time, the District is now sending a fire truck to every medical emergency, which is a little like dispatching ambulances to put out fires. But the fire trucks aren't always so speedy, either. In February, a dispatcher goofed, failing to alert the station closest to a blaze in an abandoned building. Minutes were lost as trucks raced from further away. When they reached the scene, firemen found the body of a lone woman, apparently a vagrant who had taken shelter from the cold, a few feet inside the front door.

Those are the spectacular examples, the kind that make it all the way to the TV screen. The true horror of the way government functions, however, lies not in such shocking instances of incompetence, but in the everyday, banal ones. Whether you hold a government job or not, you must know people who "work to the rule." They never arrive early and they never stay late—they're the first to demand comp time and the last to make up for that two-hour doctor's appointment. This winter, a woman staying in one of D.C.'s homeless shelters grew increasingly deranged, refusing to come in from the rain. She had a history of mental illness, so workers at the shelter spent the day trying to reach her caseworker. The caseworker finally called back at 4:50. Too bad, she said, but I'm off work in 10 minutes.

A kindred spirit of that caseworker teaches fifth graders in the D.C. schools. She isn't selling drugs or

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fondling the kids, but she isn't teaching, either. "She might as well have been making canned tomatoes," fumes one parent who watched his son waste a year in the woman's class. She never prepared, didn't return papers, never stayed late to help students. "The kids became completely cynical, saying, 'She just wants us to copy the answers out of the book. She just throws them away, anyway,'" he says. "For the kids, it's about 20 percent of their conscious lives wasted."

Aside from the heartache they cause the people they're supposed to help, all these workers have something else in common: The mayor's downsizing plan can't touch them. Which means it can't even push them to work harder. The mayor won't fire people like the teacher, who works for an "independent agency" (the superintendent of schools has generously offered to pony up 300 administrative positions; a commission chaired by the economist Alice Rivlin that thoroughly evaluated the D.C. government last year conservatively asked for 800 slots). The mayor won't fire people like the dispatcher, who ranks below DS-11—the civil service level Dixon has established as her floor. She won't fire anyone who is a member of a union. That leaves her with a pool of 5,207—barely 10 percent of the District workforce—to pick from. And that pool includes people like the caseworker, whom Dixon won't fire because she holds an "essential" position. Now, cutting from those attenuated ranks will certainly help. As Scott Shuger showed in these pages last November, each manager in the District supervises about three workers; consolidating do-little management-level jobs can only make the government more efficient.

Since joining the D.C. government, Pat Kidd's been harassed, humiliated, sodomized, and stripped of her duties. Now she appears to be headed for her final reward: a pink slip.

But after the sense of a coming D.C. renaissance Dixon's campaign generated last year, that gain seems so slight, and it promises to be so fleeting. Even for the 5,000 who are blowing in the breeze, Dixon's plan is less a goad to work harder than an excuse to complain. After all, their efforts will have nothing to do with whether they get sacked. "They're scared generally, because they don't know, but they don't have the fear that 'If I don't do my job, I'll get caught,'" says one worker. Once the positions to be cut are announced, the so-called "bumping" rule will swing into effect, guaranteeing that the cuts will have nothing to do with performance. Through bumping, managers with little tenure in their slots can be shoved out by anyone fired from their division who has the same rank but more years of service. "That doesn't give you much solace—if you have to bump someone you know is performing," explains a city employee who is nevertheless quite prepared to take the step if need be. It doesn't give much solace to the potential bumpees, either. "I wish that some of those qualifiers [about competence] were part of the criteria for selection," says one who is suspiciously eyeing her more senior coworkers. "I could lose my job, and you could wind up with someone who doesn't give two shits." Indeed. "People," explains Lorraine Green, "were never part of the equation."

Dixon's downsizing flows from a cop-out similar to the one that supervisors throughout the District government have relied on for years: It's too much work to fire a civil servant the old-fashioned way, even though he's earned it. Faced with the paperwork, D.C. supervisors say, the easiest solution is to transfer the bum—or, perversely, to write him a glowing recommendation in hopes that he gets promoted out. Because so many supervisors can't be bothered, a review of a representative sample of the D.C. personnel files last spring showed that 85 percent were missing current appraisals. The study concluded that "the present condition . . . is such that management actions which rely on these records could be seriously impeded and successfully challenged."

For all the complaining, however, it is possible to fire civil servants. In fact, often the mere threat of exposing their miserable records is enough. "More often than not the person decided to resign. My tack usually was, 'You're not doing your job, and I'm going to go through this process,'" says Dwight Cropp, a 30-year civil servant who served as Marion Barry's director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations. No one likes to have his failures thrust in his face (or in a prospective employer's). Green says the records are now in shape. That means if Dixon challenged her supervisors to use the system, then encouraged her lawyers to trumpet to the world the incompetence of workers who illegitimately appealed their firings,

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she might find it's not impossible to chop away the deadwood after all. She could dismiss people because of the jobs they're doing, not their job descriptions. By taking the faster and easier route instead, she's powerfully reinforcing the notion that there can be no real accountability in the D.C. government.

There's an important difference between Dixon's approach to downsizing and the body-count strategy used during the Vietnam war. In Vietnam, body-count logic ultimately had to yield to reality, since the inescapable fact that we weren't winning could only mean that the enemy we were supposedly killing off wasn't losing. When it comes to cutting bureaucrats, there's no such guarantee, because Dixon has misidentified the enemy, calling it insolvency rather than bad government. Five years from now, after the government has made its cuts, when the recession is over and the fiscal crisis has eased, when the leaders of Washington discover that, by the only meaningful standards, we're still losing—that the ambulance is still reaching the scene long after the old woman's heart has stopped beating, that foster children are still vanishing into the bureaucracy like so many stickballs down a sewer—they won't have to rethink their logic. They'll be able simply to blame the problem on too few resources—"Heck, I guess those excess workers weren't excess after all"—and start hiring those people back . . . until the next fiscal crisis. As long as governments play the numbers game, the real enemies—laziness, inefficiency, incompetence—will keep slipping away, unscathed, into that spooky bureaucratic jungle. Because, ultimately, it's not just the positions themselves but the people who fill them that count, and who need to be counted properly.

Naming the victim

Not just political leaders make the mistake of ignoring performance on the job. For some reason, the press also tends not to treat bureaucrats as people, at least not until they leave the office for the day. "I still hope [Dixon] reconsiders this draconian scheme to fire what would amount to a large number of black heads of households in exchange for a $200 million payoff from Congress," wrote the *Post* columnist Courtland Milloy. "[T]o brutally chop at the heart of Washington's black middle class to impress some disinterested white men on Capitol Hill makes her look like a modern-day plantation overseer." His language may be more colorful than most, but Milloy, in writing of public servants only as "heads of households," is simply making his contribution to the chief budget-cutback genre—the victim story.

There are two types of victims: Those whose services have been slashed ("New York City's new budget," began one *New York Times* story, "means that Ethany E. Watley, an 80-year-old widow who uses a wheelchair because of arthritis, no longer has a daily lunch delivered to her home in East Harlem") and those whose jobs are in danger of being cut ("'I'm holding on to every penny,' said the 40-year-old single parent who has a daughter she hopes to send to college in a couple of years"—*The Washington Post*). Have you ever seen a piece that treats the two types of victims together? In tackling such a story, the reporter might be forced to draw a line from the wheelchair-bound widow to the 40-year-old worker, and contend with the great, unasked questions: Well, was the worker doing a bad job of delivering the meal in the first place? Could she have found a cheaper way to do it, to save it from the budget axe? Is she really a victim, or a victimizer?

Reporters' desire to play up the drama of the job-loss-victim story has led to some revealing, formulaic lapses. Take the one-in-six refrain: Most D.C. bloat-reduction stories warn that "someone—a father, a nephew, a sister, a grandmother—in one of every six households in the District gets a paycheck from the city. And from those ranks, as many as 2,000 could be out of a job soon." O.K. One in six households has a city worker . . . 2,000 on the chopping block . . . that's one in every 24 workers . . . Hey! That means a whopping 1 in every 144 homes will be affected! And come to think of it, 144 in every 144 homes have to file tax returns, and 144 in 144 homes count on the city for vital services. Here's another favorite: The classes of workers that Dixon has targeted have salaries ranging from $31,027 to $81,885—but for some reason, only the bottom figure is ever provided (just as only the top figure for the cuts is ever given; in fact, Dixon is planning to lay off between 1,200 and 2,000 workers). There may be a legitimate case to be made for the government to serve as the employer of last resort, but it quickly unravels when the wages run up as high as $81,000. If John Sununu had taken between 1 and 50 private trips in Air Force jets, don't you suspect the *Post* would supply the whole range?

All of this is not to deny the very real pain in store for those who lose their jobs. It's just to say that, in seizing on the pat drama these victim stories offer, reporters do a huge disservice to both city workers and city residents. Milloy, for one, has ripped into the services provided by what he has called "pitiful city government." If the mayor were targeting workers for incompetence, rather than for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time, then her critics would have a much tougher time attacking her. But given

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the mayor's lack of interest, the press ought to take the opportunity presented by downsizing to do the hard work of giving a face to the bureaucracy, exposing the public servants responsible for pitiful government and protecting those black (and white) heads of households who are doing their damnedest to make the system work. It's not easy, particularly when jobs are on the line. But if they would try, they'd discover that bureaucrats at work can provide drama at least as complex and rich as those about to be axed. Consider the city employees who staff D.C.'s Department of Administrative Services. In the course of doing (and not doing) the people's business, they've performed everything from miracle turnarounds to shady real estate deals to sodomy. The stories of the agency and a few of its workers show how much of a difference a thorough downsizing would make—and how little difference the mayor's will.

DAS bloat

First, the duties. The Department of Administrative Services is supposed to help other D.C. government administrators administer their administrations more efficiently. Believe it or not, it's an important role—or at least it could be—as suggested by this pious call-and-response between Rep. Julian Dixon and Raymond Lambert, then the director of DAS, during last year's District appropriations subcommittee hearings:

> MR. LAMBERT: We are the backbone of the government.
> MR. DIXON: You are the nerve center of the District government.
> MR. LAMBERT: And as other agencies increase in size and have more responsibilities, our responsibilities also increase.

DAS oversees procurement for the government; it buys, leases, and maintains its buildings; and it buys its computer and telecommunications systems. Three of the four main goals laid out by the Rivlin Commission for making the government work better—"investing in automated systems and new technology," "consolidating administrative facilities," and "streamlining purchasing and procurement"—are DAS functions, and the fourth—"reducing excessive

It's Not Easy Being Greene

Here's a downsizing brain teaser for you: By Mayor Dixon's standards, Carl Greene, chief of tenant management at the Department of Public and Assisted Housing, should be axed, since by his own admission he's paid $47,000 per year to do almost nothing. But because of the mayor's strategy for downsizing, Greene and the useless positions he's filled over the years probably won't be touched—the job descriptions make those slots sound essential. Here's the final twist: Greene *shouldn't* be fired—he's a motivated, able worker, as both the mayor and *The Washington Post* have testified—but he should be given some real work to do. Unfortunately, he probably won't be, because it's all a little too complicated for D.C.'s nondiscriminating downsizing.

In 1988, Greene automated the records of the District's Tenant Assistance Program, saving the city $370,000 in the process. His supervisors awarded him a plaque and an $800 bonus, and then things started to fall apart. Greene was passed over for promotions and detailed to the Office of Financial Management, where he wasn't given a computer to work with. Worse, he wasn't given anything to do. Wiling away his hours at his health club, Greene began to conclude that if he hadn't worked so hard, he might still be hard at work. He talked to his supervisors, wrote pleading letters, and finally filed a grievance, which he says only made things worse.

Finally, Greene talked to a reporter at *The Washington Post*. The subsequent article—"The Man Who Wants to Work"—got him noticed. Not only did Greene make the evening news, but Dixon held a 30-minute meeting with him, prompting another story, "Dixon Vows to Keep City Worker Busy": "Dixon said she will make it clear to managers, including Greene's supervisor, that they are to make sure all workers are challenged." Great news. Case closed. Dixon went about her business. The *Post* reporter went about hers. Greene went back to doing nothing.

As we reported in July, six months after the flurry of mayoral and media attention, Greene remained idle. Two months later, he still is. He was transferred to the maintenance division of the housing department to make the computer operations more efficient—but there are no computers. He writes memos every now and again, and he xeroxes. "I thought if you worked hard you'd be rewarded," he says. "But the reprisals are significant." That those reprisals don't include firing—and that in Greene's case they should, but then again, they shouldn't, but they should include abolishing the worthless jobs he's held—reveals the kind of detail work Dixon would have to do to truly clean house.

—Betsy Dance

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staffing, especially at middle management levels"—is one DAS could accomplish as well, since it would come as a byproduct of the other three. If you wanted to make a stab at reforming the District government, serving as the director of DAS wouldn't be a bad place to start.

And you wouldn't necessarily need more people to do it—you'd just need to figure out how to use some of the ones you've got effectively. Like the Vietcong, the DAS staff, on paper, doesn't seem too formidable. After all, its numbers actually declined, due to attrition, during the late eighties. Lambert summed up this terrible problem last year: Since September of 1988, "we have lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 115 people. . . . That has had a devastating impact." Despite the devastation, the agency this year requested a decrease of *another* 75 full-time positions out of last year's total of 439. "If you're looking at an agency for waste, you won't find much at DAS," says a former D.C. council aide who oversaw the DAS budget.

The bureaucrat charged with supervising millions of dollars of the city government's property had his real estate license suspended for "endanger[ing] the public interest" by acts that "constituted fraudulent or dishonest dealings."

Certainly, DAS can't compete with some other D.C. agencies, in particular the Department of Human Services and the school bureaucracy, for bloat. But when you examine the apparent DAS shrinkage, it reveals what a shell game staffing in the D.C. government can be. Those 75 slots, paid for in last year's budget, were already empty—some of them had been that way for more than three years; either the agency had been taking the money that was intended for them and spending it elsewhere, or, as Lambert says, he wasn't actually receiving the total appropriation he'd been promised. (Similarly, the superintendent of schools came under fire earlier this year when it was discovered that 75 of the administrative slots he'd promised to axe were already empty.)

In any event, in cutting those 75 positions, DAS dumped no one. This kind of cutting, which Dixon has done throughout the government, is smart, because as soon as the fiscal crisis ends, those slack positions, if still on the books, would quickly fill. But it doesn't address the government's real problems, as DAS's response to that troublesome Rivlin Commission demonstrates. The Commission suggested that DAS axe 20 wasteful middle management positions. Of those, DAS cut 11. Of those, 8 slots were occupied, inconveniently, by live human beings. Those people were all transferred to other jobs within DAS. By the way, most of the empty slots were below DS-11; of those warm bodies left in DAS, more than one in three—39.1 percent—are DS-11s or above; in other words, each manager has, on average, about 2.5 people to manage.

What is astonishing about all this is its completely random quality. Surely *some* of those slots, emptied by attrition, were so crucial that they would have to be filled. But in general they weren't—suggesting that most of them were to some degree "nonessential." Instead of the presence of work dictating the need for a worker, the reverse relationship appears to pertain. Which would seem to imply an absence of work. Rep. Dixon, a year ago, couldn't quite puzzle it out. "It just doesn't make any sense. Maybe the truth," he suggested, "is that [DAS] has got 439 employees and only 39 are working." If he's right—and the way some DAS staff members talk, his guess isn't as ridiculous as it sounds—there's no way Mayor Dixon will ever find out about it.

Although bloat is a drain on the District's resources and contributes mightily to inefficiency, the problem is more profound than that—a fact the mayor's strategy ignores. "In most cases," says Dwight Cropp, workers "have been around a while, and have been allowed to function at a mediocre or less level, and in many cases it wasn't that they couldn't function at a higher level, it was that they hadn't been challenged and so had gotten into bad habits . . . and it was hard if not impossible to turn them around." Working to the rule isn't a problem just in D.C. As Bruce Gordon, a recently retired DAS manager, puts it: "You know what's wrong with the system? People who are mediocre become superstars. Mediocrity looks like excellence. I kept getting outstanding ratings in the federal system, but I'm not outstanding—I'm mediocre. I just get it done." The really good ones, he says, the ones who show initiative, stay late, take work home, "are the ones getting screwed—the Sarah Lyons."

Sarah Lyon doesn't work at DAS anymore; she quit in May. "She breaks the mold," Gordon explains. "She was a hard worker, and the mold there is to be

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laid back and comfortable." Lyon has filed a suit against the District alleging she was discriminated against. A DS-12 staff appraiser for the troubled Real Property Administration within DAS, she applied for three different supervisory positions in 1988. According to court documents filed by Lyon's attorney, of the four to six people who applied for each position, Lyon was the only applicant who was white, the only applicant who was not rated "well qualified" and hence was not interviewed—and the only applicant who had training in negotiating contracts, a BA degree, a graduate business education, and a real estate broker's license. (But then again, even the associate director of the Real Property Administration, William Reddick, who supervises millions of dollars worth of property, doesn't have an active broker's license; according to the records of the D.C. Real Estate Commission, his license was suspended in 1988 for "conduct [that] demonstrated unworthiness to act as a real estate broker so as to endanger the public interest" and that "constituted fraudulent or dishonest dealing." That finding apparently hasn't slowed him down much: "Like everybody else," says one Real Property staff member, "Bill buys real estate and does personal things while on the job.")

Maybe Lyon, who wouldn't speak about her case, didn't deserve the promotion. But she certainly didn't deserve what came after she began filing internal grievances. As happened in at least two similar cases at DAS, supervisors began to harass her, Lyon claims: She was denied material she needed to do her work; she was designated "absent without leave" while she was on her lunch hour. Eventually, she requested to be detailed to another agency (where she was credited with helping beef up the District's new appraiser licensing program), and then, from that new position, asked not to be returned to DAS; DAS put her right back under the same supervisors. Lyon quit.

It might be that Lyon really wasn't much of a worker, that, despite the praise of co-workers, all her credentials were only that, credentials . . . except for one thing. Sarah Lyon is the woman that Housing and Urban Development investigators say blew open D.C.'s own HUD scandal, the nation's largest. As a temporary employee at HUD in 1984, Lyon came across disturbing similarities in the applications for mortgage loan guarantees she was evaluating. Her supervisor told her to forget about it and stick to her paperwork. Lyon stayed on the trail, using her evenings and weekends to study property records and visit sites. Eventually, she found enough dirt to spark a federal investigation that uncovered a network of hundreds of lawyers, real estate brokers, and investors that had cost the taxpayers millions of dollars and tossed hundreds of District residents out of their homes. Thanks to Lyon, more than 50 crooks have received prison terms so far. She was presented with assorted awards, including a special City Council resolution last year commending her for uncovering "the most notorious real estate scam in the District of Columbia." But Lyon breaks the mold—she is a whistleblower and the kind of worker who makes her supervisors look like laggards—so today she's looking for a job. HUD wouldn't hire her as a permanent employee. And now DAS has driven her out of government work entirely.

Inspector generous

The mayor's downsizing is the reductio ad absurdum of a system that doesn't track performance by agency, let alone by individual. "There are no standards, there are no yardsticks—deliberately," says a former DAS worker. "See, that way you can keep changing the rules so the person in control can stay in control."

Take how DAS responded to the Procurement Practices Act of 1985. The act demanded, sensibly enough, that after all these years the District establish guidelines for training its procurement officers—you know, the folks responsible for spending millions of taxpayer dollars. DAS was tasked with designing the training program. The Office of the Inspector General, the mayor's watchdog, followed up to make sure the job was getting done:

> *March 31, 1989*: In establishing a procurement personnel and procurement training system, DAS has placed the establishment of the [Procurement Officer Warrant Program] and the training of those procurement officers as the highest priority. . . . DAS expects to formally announce the POWP to agencies and the fee schedule for the required training by the end of June 1989.

> *March 31, 1990*: Plans are under way for the development of subsequent training sessions for District-wide procurement personnel. Also, work continues on the establishment by DAS of the Procurement Officer Warrant Program which will result in the certification of contracting personnel upon successful completion of mandatory procurement courses. It is anticipated that this program will be implemented during fiscal year 1991.

> *March 31, 1991*: DAS is still focusing on developing training sessions for District-wide procurement personnel. Also, DAS continues its efforts to establish the Procurement Officer Warrant Program. This will result in the certifi-

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cation of contracting personnel after the successful completion of mandatory procurement training courses. It is anticipated that this program will be implemented during fiscal year 1992.

You can picture the inspector general, hunched over his word processor, slaving away at next year's blistering critique—

SEARCH: 1992.
REPLACE WITH: 1993.

Training programs like this are the sort of thing that allow governments to cut bloat effectively, doing more work with fewer workers . . . which may be one reason DAS has failed to come up with one. As one DAS staff member puts it, "Why would I teach someone else to do my job?"

This failure of follow-through by the official watchdogs leaves the field to one guardian: the press. But while both *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* report on the occasional scandalous contract negotiated by DAS (most recently, on the purchase of a new headquarters for the D.C. government, for which DAS had wildly varying appraisals), neither paper has looked to see how the system itself breaks down. "Everyone at the *Post* sort of stayed away from [DAS] because it was supposed to be such a morass," says Margaret Engel, a former *Post* Metro reporter. "You could never get any reports out of it." Unfortunately, you could stick almost any agency's acronym between those brackets, and the statement would still ring true.

Contract killers

When you ask them about accountability, some veteran DAS workers start talking dreamily about the brief period that Bruce Gordon ran the procurement division. Gordon's accomplishments there—and how they were undone—demonstrate why it's the person, rather than the position, that matters. The District government charges DAS with both overseeing the $1 billion in procurement city agencies do each year and handling a large chunk of the contracting itself. As one might expect, given the absence of a training program, it doesn't do a very good job. A study completed for the Rivlin Commission reported that some 70 percent of contracts reviewed contained errors or lacked documentation. The federal government sets as its standard that each contract officer handle 25 contracts per year; in the District, that ratio works out to 1 to 10. "There is not," the report observed dryly, "a discernible relationship between the procurement workload of the many departments/offices and their staffing complement." If the District hit the federal standard, it could lay off 122 procurement officers, for savings of $5 million; if the remaining workers jacked up their productivity by a mere 2 percent, the Rivlin auditor calculated, the city could save *$25 million* each year.

When he arrived in 1988, Gordon was shocked by what he found at DAS. "One of the things I found, if you were experienced, you were taken advantage of. . . . The other people sit back and read the newspapers while you're working hard and staying late, and everyone else is going home. It's always the people who are doing the right thing who get taken advantage of. It's a disincentive to doing a good job." Thanks to that environment, DAS was taking up to three years to process contracts. There was no system for tracking the millions of dollars in procurement requests that poured through the office, Gordon discovered, no system to show who was gumming up the works and whether the process was being abused.

So he created one. Gordon broke his staff down into teams: "What I was trying to do was to make them accountable by giving performance markers to make sure they had produced within a certain time." As procurement requests came in from the agencies, he sent out memos laying out specific deadlines for moving contracts through. "What we were doing was establishing contract specialist standards to measure them on a weekly and monthly basis, from when the contract was instituted to when it was executed: Were they producing on schedule, and was it accurate and complete? [Their reports] all had to come to me with signatures." What happened next, according to one involved DAS worker, was "magical." "They started competing among themselves, putting peer pressure on the nonperformers," says Gordon, giving an appraisal that is supported by other past and present DAS workers. Productivity shot up. (Just to give you some sense of how low the standards were to begin with, however, here's one observer of the process waxing rapturous over Gordon's reforms: "One Friday afternoon they had a meeting, and the staff did not leave till after 6 o'clock—they did not want to leave.") "The number of errors decreased considerably," says Lambert, the former director. "I don't know that that was continued after [Gordon] left."

It wasn't. Once the system was up and running, Gordon had a meeting with his supervisor, Lorraine Green: "I was looking for an 'attaboy'—a pat on the back. What'd I get instead? A kick in the ass." Gordon says Green told him she wasn't interested in his reforms. "The reason you're tired," he remembers her saying, "is that you're doing things you don't need to do." When Lambert, who today says Gordon did an "outstanding job," nevertheless backed Green up, Gordon tried to quit. But Lambert convinced him to accept a post in another division of the agency. "I

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never in my career directed anyone not to work hard," says Green of the incident. "I don't recall that," says Lambert, now the inspector general of Philadelphia. "It might have happened, but I just don't recall."

When Gordon transferred, Lambert moved another man into the procurement job. "The fellow who took over after him just scuttled the entire system, reduced accountability to zero," says a recently resigned DAS manager. It's worth noting that a previous director of DAS, after raising questions about the way city officials were manipulating the contracting process, found himself demoted within two days, investigated by the mayor's office within a week, and out on the street within two months. Lorraine Green, you will recall, is now the director of the Office of Personnel, from where she is supervising the mayor's effort to downsize the government—deciding who's doing precisely the things they need to do.

Inside jobs

Zero-point-two percent: That's how many of the people who work for her D.C.'s new mayor has been able to hire. At DAS, she was able to stick in one person to energize an agency of close to 400. As a result, she confronts a network of longtime District workers who can subvert not only her downsizing, but other reforms as well. The mayor's tightly circumscribed ability to hire and fire is a function of the civil service reforms intended to protect good government from political shenanigans, reforms that have been consecrated by time. Even as the city council gave the mayor emergency powers, it retained the bumping provision to ensure that she could exercise them only in a random manner—in a way that, in the words of Council Chairman John Wilson, "protects the integrity of the civil service process."

Trouble is, that process doesn't have too much integrity left—a point understood by every government worker but virtually unaddressed in the press coverage of downsizing. The merit tests that once so enraged the political bosses have more or less disappeared. That makes sense; experience and specific skills should count more than scores on standardized tests. But in practice, those factors don't count much either. It's the "who-ya-knows," in the words of one DAS Real Property worker, who get the jobs. "Say for instance you came by and you were my buddy," says this worker. "Say for instance I want to hire you. I'll tell you all about the position, so you can fill out your 171 [the District's standard employment form] so you perfectly fit the position, so you get on the 'qualify' list. Then I select a few to interview, including you. So then I break it down to two, and then I just hire you. I just pick from there. It's the same with inside hiring. . . . Real Property has always been a dump, because they always want to get somebody they know, instead of somebody who can do the work."

Similar tricks can be used to promote your pals. "There are 15,000 ways to do that," says Bruce Gordon. "Like you create a career ladder. Let's say you have a DS-14 position but your friend is only a DS-9. So what you do is drop that grade from the 14 down to a 10, so that he qualifies, then you create a ladder so that the job moves back up to a 14 over time. So you've [created] a six-year growth pattern that's restrictive, not competitive." The result of ploys like these, according to past and present staff members, is a network in the upper levels of DAS—indeed, throughout the District government—with no interest in change. "There are a lot of people in top-level positions who are there as a result of [the buddy system]. They undercut [Lambert] something terrible, and I think they would do it again," says a recently retired top DAS manager. These are the people who will ultimately decide which positions are "nonessential." "You're using people inside to identify them, but *someone's* been protecting them all these years," says one DAS worker. "Think about it. If I'm the administrator and I've been working with these people a good six, seven, eight years—I know them, they do my bidding. The administrators advance to the directors the positions that are excess. And if you like somebody, you're not going to advance their position." Imagine: All the insider dealing of a patronage machine, with a .2 percent solution to that old nagging problem of political accountability for miserable services. George Washington Plunkitt would have been impressed.

Screwed

Come downsizing time, it won't be the who-ya-knows who wind up on the street. It'll be who-ya-pissed-offs, like Patricia Kidd. Kidd says she left the federal service and came looking for work at DAS in 1987 because "I wanted to be with the young black government." Since joining the team, she's been harassed, humiliated, sodomized, and stripped of her duties. After somehow enduring this nightmare, she appears to be headed for her final reward: a pink slip. "I'm not the enemy," says Kidd. "I don't know why these people act as though I'm the enemy."

At Kidd's job interview four years ago, her prospective supervisor, Melvin Carter, mentioned that D.C., incredibly, had no formal means of tracking the office space it leased and owned. Once hired, but before she began work, Kidd started drawing up a

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computer program that would fill the need; her first day on the job, she presented Carter with a draft proposal. Her idea was a hit, and it eventually grew into the Properties and Facilities Management Program, incorporated into D.C. law in 1990. Her hard work did not go unnoticed. "Your work habits have always been exemplary," wrote one supervisor from outside DAS who was detailed to work with her on a computer project. "I have rarely worked with a person who had such a driving desire to learn new things, and more importantly, an intense desire to do the best job possible."

But it quickly became clear to Kidd that her immediate boss had ideas of his own, which had nothing at all to do with work. First came the cajoling, then the threatening, then the more aggressive advances. Kidd says Carter would return from lunch, drunk, and make aggressive passes at her. "Coworkers would tolerate it, as long as it wasn't happening to them." Kidd continued to try to work on a computer program to help other agencies assess their space needs, but, she later testified, Carter began to forbid her to use the office computer, and he took away her clerical assistant. When she called the Office of Personnel hoping for a transfer, Kidd says, the officer she talked to told her that Carter was her pal; if she wanted a new job, Carter would have to make the request. Shortly thereafter, Carter angrily told her that he knew she was trying to find another job, and that she wouldn't get it. After several months of this, Carter called one day and asked her to join him in a room at the Comfort Inn, near the office: "You are on probation—you can be gotten rid of," she remembers him saying. She went.

She had sex with him on two occasions; he promoted her.

Finally, it became too much for Kidd. But after she cut Carter off, the harassment didn't stop. She complained to her supervisors, to no effect. She began filing grievances, which got her nowhere (although she discovered that other employees had made similar complaints against Carter). She applied over Carter's head for a transfer, which was denied. And so on. After D.C.'s Office of Human Rights ruled against her, Kidd finally took Carter to civil court and won $300,000. The judge granted Kidd a retroactive increase in her civil service grade, ordered that DAS not retaliate against her, and recommended that the city find another job for her outside DAS. Over a technicality, the District is appealing the case.

Today, Kidd is still at DAS. Before Carter took an early-out last November, she would sometimes run into him in the elevator. Kidd, who won several performance awards for her work in the federal system, who even before she got her job would attend city council meetings to figure out what the District's automation needs were, spends her days correcting errors in computer printouts. She's appealed to Ric Murphy, the new director, for a transfer or more challenging work, but he hasn't helped. "I'm working on property disposal. That duty used to be one thirteenth of my workload. My supervisor's working on it with me, too." Her old duties, she says, have been taken away from her and split up among five other workers.

Other DAS staff members make the same complaint. One worker whose rank puts him below the firing line says four people who rank above DS-11 have been "hidden" by being assigned the work he used to do all by himself. As Kidd says, "Why not keep me, who can do it all, and get rid of five people who can't do anything and have to be trained? I'm not the excess, they are. They even made a new division out of the functions I did with the computer program, for about six people."

That sort of information will never turn up in the mayor's downsizing sweep. The only way to get it is by going beyond the elliptical job descriptions and the baroque organizational charts, sending people out to perform desk audits of each of the agencies, interviewing the staff to determine who's contributing and who's not. That's hard work, and the information will never be perfect—but it's the only way to turn downsizing into something more than a fiscal quick fix. "We want dirt and debris cut," says Kidd, "but there's a big difference between that and 2,000 random bodies. You can get rid of employees, sure—but the system's still there."

In late July, Murphy called a meeting of all his staff members ranking DS-11 and above. As the workers shifted from foot to foot in the crowded room, he explained that he wanted each fill to out a slip of paper explaining his duties and listing his accomplishments. The city spends $15.6 million on an Office of Personnel, DAS maintains layers of supervisors presumably familiar with the performance of their underlings, and yet it came down to this: scribbled self-assessments on scraps of paper, sent straight to the director, bypassing all the layers of supervisors. All in all, a pretty smart move. Except for two things: Bad people lie. Good ones don't— and Murphy was interested only in what his employees had done since he came aboard in March. Pat Kidd raised her hand.

I've lost my duties since March, she said. I can't tell you what my duties are because I don't know. I'm really concerned. I'm concerned for me, I'm concerned for my family.

Murphy just stared at her, Kidd says. Well, look, he said at last. You *better* be concerned. □

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

GUINNESS BOOK ANNOUNCES NEW RECORD: MOST GROUPS OFFENDED IN A SINGLE SENTENCE
An article in *The New York Times* recently stated, "Blacks make up a large contingent at West Point's 'prep school,' a summer program developed to help borderline cases like enlisted men and women seeking admission to the military academy."

DESERT YIELD
During the Persian Gulf war, Los Angeles television station KABC adopted a policy of not covering local antiwar demonstrations, and a reporter on competitor KCAL anchored the evening newscast wearing a naval officer's uniform.

SHIFTING PRIORITIES
Just days after making a speech denouncing cars as a peril to the environment, Prince Charles had his Bentley Turbo sports car driven to Czechoslovakia by a chauffeur so that he and Princess Diana could use it there on a brief official visit.

RATED PG: PLUGGING GRATUITOUSLY
The movie "Home Alone" contains 42 references to 31 brand names.

FOR WHY WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, PLEASE SEE ATTACHED COVER SHEET.
Rebels on the South Pacific island of Bougainville announced their intention to separate from the government of Papua New Guinea by fax.

SIXTY PERCENT HOUSING SLASH LEADS WAY IN CAL STATE CUTBACK
When California State University's $3.6 million chancellor's residence became a symbol of extravagance, the school's trustees decided to replace it with a 4,670 square-foot house selling for $1.45 million.

COMING SOON: CARDS FOR PLAYERS' DRUG-TEST ADVISERS AND PATERNITY LAWYERS
A baseball card manufacturer has announced plans to market trading cards featuring big-name sports agents.

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. ARMY AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY CENTER AND FORT BLISS
FORT BLISS, TEXAS 79916-0058

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

July 10, 1991

Freedom of Information Office

Mr. Mark Thompson
Knight Ridder
Washington Bureau
700 National Press Building
529 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20045

Dear Mr. Thompson:

Reference your Freedom of Information Act request, dated April 12, 1990, our interim replies, dated May 2, 1990 and August 10, 1990, and telephone conversation between Ms. Coffey, of this office and yourself on October 12, 1990.

As you were informed by Ms. Coffey, the Army unit (3d Armored Cavalry Regiment) conducting the collateral board investigation into the Army AH-1 helicopter crash of March 23, 1990 deployed for Saudi Arabia before the investigation was finalized. The investigation was finalized in Saudi Arabia. However, we were informed by the President of the board conducting the investigation that his copy of the finalized report was placed in a storage area and the storage area was destroyed. The copy submitted to the Regimental Adjutant was stored in a field desk that has not arrived from Saudi Arabia. There is a possibility that the desk has been lost enroute to Fort Bliss.

If the desk arrives, and the report is found, it will be reviewed for releasability and you will be provided the releasable portions. If the report is not found within the next few months, we will so inform you.

We regret that we have been unable to provide this report to you and appreciate your your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Elias C. Garza
Freedom of Information Act
Officer

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Is It Any of Your Business?

What the press should and shouldn't tell you

by Marjorie Williams

Pity the politician, beset by sharks and vultures, fanatical reformers and a moralistic press. For at least a decade, it's been open season on anyone foolish enough to run for office or serve in government—an age of "mindless cannibalism," in the words of former speaker of the House and onetime entree Jim Wright.

Or so say Suzanne Garment and Larry J. Sabato,* lending their very different voices to the chorus of analysts who have lately specialized in second thoughts about the cloud of scandal that enshrouded the Reagan administration and then drifted down Pennsylvania Avenue to engulf the House leadership and the Keating Five. Their books both argue that the ethical, financial, political, and sexual scandals of recent years represent a kind of hysteria, and that Americans in general and journalists in particular need to reevaluate how far they are willing to go in judging the human creatures elected to govern us.

But the books offer very different explanations. Sabato's, devoted almost exclusively to press coverage of political scandal, simply argues that the press has become too prosecutorial, too herd-like, and insufficiently respectful of politicians' private lives: "The press has become obsessed with gossip rather than governance; it prefers to employ titillation rather than scrutiny; as a result, its political coverage produces trivialization rather than enlightenment."

Garment makes a more sophisticated, more provocative argument that the entire political culture of America has shifted so that its components perpetually collude to produce scandals—among other things, as a distraction from having to produce intelligible policy. It's

Marjorie Williams is a reporter for The Washington Post.

**Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics.* Suzanne Garment. *Times Books, $23.00. Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics.* Larry J. Sabato. *Free Press, $22.95.*

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not that politicians have become more corrupt, she writes; it's that we have become a nation of goody-goodies. "Today's myriad scandals come in much larger part from the increased enthusiasm with which the political system now hunts evil in politics and the ever-growing efficiency with which our modern scandal production machine operates."

She details this apparatus at length, including the investigative and prosecutory machinery within the government: the Office of the Independent Counsel, the Justice Department's Public Integrity Section, the ever-swelling oversight committee staffs on Capitol Hill, and the agencies' inspectors general. Outside, the public advocacy groups have grown adept at feeding journalists leads and information; the post-Watergate rules and regulations police everything from political contributions to revolving-door employment to financial disclosure. New mores allow reporters to cover issues and events formerly off limits—or to cover familiar areas of politicians' lives with a new kind of skepticism.

Days of the jackals

The crux of Garment's argument is that each of these new inventions or developments feeds the others to create a vicious cycle of perceived corruption, voter mistrust, and ever-closer regulation:

> Out of distaste with the grubby realities of democratic politics, recent reformers managed to weaken those centers of power, like political parties, where much of the fundraising and favor-giving in politics once took place. Today, such activities must be more closely attended to by individual officeholders themselves. At the same time as this change was taking place, the same anti-political distaste brought about new rules making all the wheeling and dealing much more visible than ever before. We are now given a more detailed view of our officials doing decreasingly exalted things. The distaste thus increases, as does the pressure for more reform.

It is, of course, possible to point to reforms that boomeranged. The sorry hegemony of PACs, which was the result of post-Watergate campaign fundraising reforms, stands as the best testament to the law of unintended consequences. And yes, there have been examples of officials abused or mistreated in the course of ethics investigations. Garment is also on the mark in arguing that we are too quick to criminalize anything that smacks of political scandal. We don't always serve ourselves best by trying to nail a problem's creators: Once the logic and rules of criminal procedure are put in place, they can crowd out attempts to address what is more fundamentally a program flaw or a policy question.

But Garment goes far, far beyond where her evidence takes her into a realm where there seem to be no public misdeeds alarming enough to justify vigilance. Officials are never responsible for their acts; they are driven to them by prosecutorial do-gooders, or they are being held to preposterous new ethical standards. As an example, Garment writes that "even Clark Clifford, whose political perspicacity and survival skills were admired in Washington for some 40 years, has had the end of his career marred by a post-Watergate scandal," as if this were irrefutable proof of how absurdly picky Washington has become, rather than the fruit of Clifford's manifestly bad behavior in fronting for a shady international bank.

"In fact," Garment writes, "the focus on specific prohibitory rules may make us less rather than more able to control the offending behavior." What she means is that, in the good old days, politicians controlled *themselves*; today their moral clarity has broken down under the weight of all these pettifogging rules.

Standards really have changed in Washington, in a lot of different areas. It's a mistake—which both these authors make in their dissimilar ways—to codify these shifts as a single political sea change, brought about by the sudden dominance of one faction, one public mood, or one fashion in press coverage.

Sabato, a political scientist to the bone, draws up somber charts and graphs tabulating 36 events that exemplify the "frenzy phenomenon." They range from Watergate to Chappaquiddick, from Edmund Muskie's tears to Jimmy Carter's brush with the killer rabbit—events that really can't be meaningfully examined as a single phenomenon. Sabato writes from the trap of considering all reportage an exercise in "perception," as if the events he describes had no reality at all separate from their coverage.

Lest mine seem a knee-jerk reaction by one of the press corps jackals, I must grant Sabato some of his specifics. It *is* horrible to have a mob of journalists camped out in your begonias. Yes, journalists too often rely on group instinct to set their narrative direction during a scandal-in-progress. And he quite rightly criticizes the press when it prints or broadcasts unfounded rumors on the grounds that the existence of the rumor is itself news because everybody—that is, in the community of a thousand or so people who make up insider politics—is talking about it.

That said, Sabato, like Garment, leaves himself open to the supposition that he is writing in service of nostalgia—of a profound preference for the old ways Washington did its business.

Sabato betrays himself when he sighs that persecution by the press has gotten so bad that some pols

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are forced to consult with media heavyweights in order to gauge their liabilities. He cites the example of a prospective 1988 presidential candidate who approached Jack Nelson, *Los Angeles Times* Washington bureau chief, to ask, in Nelson's words, "how long I thought the statute of limitations was for marital infidelity. I told him I didn't know, but I didn't think [the limit] had been reached in his case!" Sabato advances this anecdote in sympathy for the unnamed pol, who eventually decided not to run—and passes without comment over its far more extraordinary testimony: that pols and big-wheel journalists still see themselves more as cooperative peers than as people with distinct, often competing missions.

Sabato advises journalists to "take to heart the delightful slogan of one of their most marvelous institutions, the Gridiron Club: 'Singe but never burn.' Since 1885 the annual Gridiron dinner has good-naturedly roasted president and press alike, relaxing the tensions that inevitably exist between reporters and politicians. A little of the Gridiron spirit of tolerance . . . could be usefully applied to coverage the year 'round." The Gridiron dinner is, in fact, a festival of mutual stroking, dedicated to the proposition that politicians and the people who cover them are all members of the same jolly, inside-the-beltway fraternity.

If a gay congressman goes out of his way to give homophobic speeches, he is a fair candidate for "outing," not only by gay activists but by the mainstream press.

My observation, in five years of Washington journalism, has been that the major media more often betray news consumers through excessive coziness, power lust, and the simple eagerness to be liked than through the will to drive their hatchets into the powerful men and women they cover. In Washington reporting it isn't true, as Sabato claims, that all the laurels go to the writer who kills the king; success comes more easily to the one who befriends him.

Inside outing

If all the changes examined in these two books—the sunshine laws, the more expansive contemporary definition of government ethics, the press's greater efforts to delineate character—can be boiled down to any one observable theme, it is that Americans no longer trust a political elite to regulate their affairs behind closed doors. You can argue all you want about the roots and reasons: Vietnam, Watergate, feminism, the sexual revolution, the anti-authoritarian spirit of the sixties, the collapse of the political parties. But rather than see the changes as a sign of a sad diminution of trust in our institutions, one could choose to value them, as well as the increasing diversity they reflect among the people running, governing, and reporting on our affairs.

This is where Garment comes in again, brandishing an unacknowledged ideology. She has an assiduous compassion for the families of Reagan-era officials who became the "victims" of scandal, but she has only contempt for young men and women who come to Washington—usually for far less money—to agitate for good government. To suggest that the entire public advocacy corps in Washington (what she calls "the Ralph Nader conglomerate") comes here simply to delegitimize government is to turn common sense on its head: In Garment's world, the desire to strengthen government accountability is an act of radical cynicism.

To be sure, the press today has far greater discretion—which is to say power—in deciding what people should know about their leaders. And while the media do not exercise that power with perfect judgment, assigning this function to the media comes at least one step closer to letting citizens decide what they care about.

In his famous invitation to "follow me around," Gary Hart gave the media a wonderful fig leaf. Although *The Miami Herald* was already staking out his town house the day the Hart interview was published in *The New York Times Magazine*, it gave reporters a retroactive justification: Hart *forced* us to write about his sex life. But I do not believe we needed his invitation. As Suzannah Lessard persuasively argued in this magazine 10 years ago about Ted Kennedy, a man's apparently compulsive womanizing might say something important—if not to person A, then to person B or person C—about a man's character. At any rate, everyone should have the right to decide for himself.

That's not to say that everything a journalist learns should go into the paper. To return to the example of the politician who sought Jack Nelson's advice: Unless I am mistaken about the man's identity, every

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political journalist in Washington is aware of him, and of the rumor that he decided against running in 1988 at least in part because of a long-standing affair. No one has printed this information, partly for the good reason that, to most of the journalists, it *is* only a rumor. But there are two other reasons why a journalist who had this information as a rock-solid fact probably wouldn't print it, at least not now: 1) because the affair in question reportedly is or was a single relationship of long duration, not part of a pattern that might indicate compulsive behavior or habitual deceit; and 2) because the man decided against running for president, and there exists an informal rule that politicians on the next-lower rung of the political ladder—senators, governors, members of the House—can expect more privacy than presidential candidates; in other words, that the surrender of privacy should be proportionate to the extent of the power a politician aspires to hold over our lives.

These are both rules of thumb. (Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lucy Mercer would have qualified for protection under the first rule, but not the second. John F. Kennedy would have qualified under neither.) The easier case is the politician whose extramarital sex life has some illegal or dangerous aspect (Buz Lukens or, again and always, JFK, who became involved with mafia moll Judith Campbell Exner) or clearly bears some relation to the job. Take, for example, a member of Congress sleeping with a staff member who is paid by the taxpayer (Wayne Hays with Elizabeth Ray), or with a lobbyist (Tom Evans with Paula Parkinson).

The big Mack attack

At the next-easiest level is the politician whose private behavior bespeaks a striking hypocrisy. If a gay congressman goes out of his way to give homophobic speeches, for example, he is a fair candidate for "outing" not only by gay activists but by the mainstream press. A radical outing publication has recently been trying to interest the major media in a civilian Pentagon official who is gay. This is a far tougher case. Is his presence in the Defense Department a form of collusion in the military's medieval prohibition on gay servicemen and women? Lacking any evidence that he has a central leadership role in extending that policy, I would vote to preserve his privacy. It does terrible violence to the ideal of a common interest to carry too far the insistence that a particular person, by virtue of gender or sexual orientation or color or any other index, has a greater responsibility than others to address a particular issue. And it would be a very bad idea to set the press up as arbiters of special-interest purity.

Alcoholism and drug use offer clearer standards than sexuality. Postwar Washington offers a sad catalog of powerful men whose alcoholism was covered up, overlooked, and denied. Former House Speaker Carl Albert, former House Armed Services Committee Chairman L. Mendel Rivers, former House Majority Leader Hale Boggs, former Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen, former House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur Mills, and former Senate Finance Committee Chairman Russell Long are just a few of the influential men whose alcoholism, though widely known, went unreported. (Mills and Long are both recovering alcoholics today.) Even in the most destructive hours of Senator Joseph McCarthy's career, the press never reported that he sometimes swigged from a liquor bottle during press conferences and ate butter by the stick to salve his ulcers.

Although there were disturbing and unfair elements of the "character" coverage surrounding John Tower's nomination as secretary of defense, it was encouraging to see Washington at least beginning to wrestle, for the first time, with the reality of alcoholism in its midst.

Critics of the "new moralism" fear the press corps as a pack of teetotaling, prudish character cops. But the best argument for an expansive approach to reporting on politicians' backgrounds, habits, histories, and families has very little to do with vice. At the end of Freud's century we understand that people are infinitely complex beings who integrate a huge number of motives and passions in everything they do. Man is not easily compartmentalized, as Washington has long liked to believe; weaknesses and strengths may all be relevant.

This complexity is what journalists are edging toward when they mutter their arguments about how something or other speaks to a candidate's "judgment." We have only begun to invent a journalism that can write honestly and responsibly about the subtleties of human nature in politics, but I do believe that is what we are trying to do, and that it is a laudable goal.

Finally, there are cases that do not pose themselves as familiar questions of public interest, but of which the public should unquestionably be told. An excellent recent case was *The Washington Post*'s publication, in the spring of 1989, of a story detailing the ordeal of a woman named Pamela Small. Sixteen years earlier she had been senselessly attacked in a store by a clerk who lured her to a back room, pounded her skull in with a hammer, and left her to die.

She survived, but her attacker served only 27 months in a county jail. One reason for his lenient treatment was his relation, by marriage, to Rep. Jim Wright, who interceded on his behalf and promised

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him a job. Over the years, John Mack had worked his way up to become a top aide to Wright and perhaps the most powerful staffer in the House.

When Small finally decided to tell her story, the reaction in political Washington was astonishing: *Oh*, said many people on the Hill. *We knew that*. It turned out that most of the reporters covering the Hill had known about Mack's crime but had concluded that he'd paid his debt to society. The crime had taken place long ago; and, after all, he was a source. So they hadn't thought to mention it—not even, in many cases, to their editors.

The *Post* was widely criticized (and is criticized by both Garment and Sabato) for running the story in the midst of Wright's ethics troubles. But it was a riveting story, and it said some mighty riveting things about the culture of Capitol Hill that a man had so easily sloughed off the burden of an unfathomably vicious crime. Surely ordinary men and women, the people out there paying Mack one of the highest salaries in government, had a right to consider whether there are or should be limits to the concepts of rehabilitation and atonement. (When the story ran, they did, and apparently there were. Mack resigned under pressure a week later.)

Selective memory

Journalists will go on debating what should and should not be grist for their mill. Standards will continue to vary enough so that there will be no clear "statute of limitations," no bright line dividing the areas of her life a politician will and won't be seeing on the evening news. The lack of consensus will be confusing and sometimes messy. But recent events suggest that the public is capable of a carefully modulated response to "scandalous" news about public figures. Think, for example, of the different reactions to the dope-smoking pasts of two Supreme Court nominees. Douglas Ginsburg was judged harshly because he had smoked marijuana in the presence of students while a professor at Harvard Law School. Clarence Thomas is judged more leniently because his drug use, as reported by the press, was less a matter of habit and further in the past. (Also, the Reagan administration, which nominated Ginsburg, may have been slightly more vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy than the Bush administration.)

Sadly, Sabato and Garment are both persuasive in arguing that a majority of talented reporters would rather write about personalities and peccadilloes than face the difficulty of writing about government with sophistication and depth. Here Sabato has the smarter observation to offer: It's not that journalists are heavily biased in political races, he argues. They're so anxious *not* to seem biased, in fact, that they cling to a concept of journalism in which they are merely recorders and scorekeepers rather than analysts of what is at stake.

Both authors are right in arguing, too, that scandal reporting tends to distort politics. If the latest and most low-down gets the biggest play, it's impossible for any news organization to provide context for the work of reporters who are out there digging around in General Accounting Office and inspector general reports or analyzing program costs for a new weapons system. This, Garment argues, is the case with the S&L scandal. If our headlines are constant banners of sleaze, how can the public be expected to grasp the magnitude of a decade-long blunder costing hundreds of billions of dollars? The boy has cried wolf too often.

But both authors err in seeing scandal coverage as the source of every weakness in contemporary journalism. Sabato and Garment posit some past golden age of journalism in which gross misprision and policy blundering were easily and often exposed by reporters—when it was, they do not say. In fact, many of the restraints that both authors seem nostalgic for also restrained journalists from covering topics that the authors profess to value. Which reporters were systematically exposing the political cynicism that lay behind the Truman administration's loyalty program? Where was the outcry in the fifties, when U.S. soldiers were exposed to atomic tests in the Nevada desert? The same mourned-for respectability and forbearance that turned a blind eye to successive presidents' philandering also, all too often, deferentially

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overlooked affairs in which the public had an even more obvious stake.

Beat the press

Garment's regret that there wasn't an earlier, more intelligent monitoring of the S&L scandal thus contains an irony: She is talking about assigning the press a watchdog role she otherwise wishes to deny it. The press actually succeeded in naming some of the mess's component parts, and in running (usually on the financial pages) well-informed stories about local and regional S&L problems and the changes in regulation and enforcement that helped fuel the mess. What it did not do—and undoubtedly should have done—was present it as an urgent and coherent problem, and keep at it and at it and at it, even in the absence of politicians' interest. (As Garment notes, the S&L scandal went unnoticed for so long in part because it implicated both Congress and the executive, both Democrats and Republicans. No simple adversarial relationship means no sources means no story.) In newsrooms, we call this setting the agenda—a form of press behavior that Garment abhors in every other circumstance.

Garment summarizes the problems of today's press coverage by writing that "the aggressive, investigative, adversary style of journalism and the attitudes that go along with it have become the accepted measure of journalistic excellence. All good reporters, in this view, should mistrust official explanations, and reporters should occupy themselves by digging for things that established institutions do not want us to know. The central purpose of the journalistic craft, the argument continues, is to bring to citizens' attention the flaws in their institutions and leaders. . . . Indeed, the basic reason for giving the press very broad protections and privileges in a democracy is that people need to know the bad news in order to perform their duties as citizens."

That's a failing? □

The Washington Monthly JOURNALISM AWARD

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As yet another wave of Iran-contra news was breaking and the BCCI scandal was edging toward the front page, *Frontline* weighed in on May 14 with a powerful reminder of how the American intelligence apparatus can be abused. The report traced the career of James Angleton, for 20 years the CIA's chief spyhunter. "It is inconceivable," Angleton once declared, "that a secret intelligence arm of the government has to comply with all the overt orders of the government." Driven by his hatred of the Soviet Union and haunted by his failure to detect the disloyalty of his friend Kim Philby, Angleton came to believe that everyone from Willie Brandt to Henry Kissinger was under the influence of the KGB. His paranoia led him to ignore important leads because he thought them part of a KGB "master plan"; to stunt the careers of loyal agents he distrusted; to turn one genuine KGB defector back to the Soviets, who killed him; and to oversee the torturing of another defector, whom he kept locked in a cell for three and a half years.

FOR JUNE 1991 IS PRESENTED TO:

Barry Werth
The New York Times Magazine

Is your kid too short? Genentech Inc., a leading biotechnology company, is out to convince you that he is, even if he's lagging only a few inches behind his peers. Genentech has established a monopoly over a synthetically produced growth hormone, charging $150,000 for 10 years' worth of the treatment. And, though there's no clinical evidence that the stuff even works, people are snapping it up, thanks to what Werth, writing in the June 16 issue, calls "Genentech's handholding of doctors and patients, its exploiting of gaps in knowledge, its leveraging of enormously favorable federal regulations, and its blurring of the line between sickness and health." As genetic engineering advances, one wonders what other conditions will be reclassified as handicaps. Left-handedness? Brown eyes? "You want to give your child that edge no matter what," explained the mother of one child taking the drug. "I think you'd do just about anything."

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Nominations for stories published or aired in August will close September 15. The winner will be announced in the November issue.

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White Like Me

Life was easier when you could blame America's race problems on fat southern sheriffs

by Timothy Noah

I first learned what the word "race" meant when I was about six. That would have been 1964, the year identified by Thomas and Mary Edsall* as the moment when northern white support for the civil rights agenda reached its high watermark. In 1964, Lyndon Johnson signed a civil rights bill that for the first time prohibited racial segregation in all public facilities and brought the full weight of the federal government down on employers who refused to hire people then known as Negroes. Later that year, Johnson won a landslide presidential victory—the only Democrat to do so during my lifetime.

I remember LBJ's trouncing of Barry Goldwater, but I took no notice of the Civil Rights Act. Still, the word "race" must have been in the air in the upper-middle-class section of New Rochelle, New York, where we lived, because one day I asked our housekeeper, Sophie, what the word meant. Sophie explained that race was a way to describe the color of your skin. She belonged to the Negro race because her skin was black. I belonged to the white race because my skin was white. I said I thought race meant whoever runs faster wins, and Sophie matter-of-factly replied that black people and white people were in a race, and the white people were winning.

We were a liberal Democrat family in a liberal Democrat community. Then, as now, the whites most ardently in favor of expanding opportunities for blacks tended to be the same sort who could afford to employ a black live-in maid. (Today the domestic is more likely to be Hispanic, but that has less to do with changing mores than changing demographics.) Race was an increasingly visible aspect of our lives, and my family responded with the jittery, befuddled urge to do right that was typical of northern suburbanites of that era. When a middle-class black family moved onto our street—from Minnesota, of all places—we bustled about to make them feel welcome. My grade school principal was a black female Ph.D. whom we respectfully called Doctor, and several of the teachers were black, too. The pupils were mostly white, but that was mitigated somewhat by the busing of black kids from New Rochelle's vaguely raffish downtown.

These were the days when children were still taught that the suffering of blacks was entirely the result of southern oppression. The Mississippi killings of civil rights activists Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, white New Yorkers, drove home the point that southern bigots were a menace to us all. The disdain with which we northern suburbanites viewed the mid-sixties white southern power structure was captured perfectly in the movie *In the Heat of the Night*. The Bull Connor-esque sheriff played by Rod Steiger was the very soul of southern bigotry; that the black detective played by Sidney Poitier was the sheriff's moral and intellectual superior was demonstrated most vividly by the fact that he didn't have a trace of a southern accent.

Civil whites

Of course, political events over the next quarter-century showed how smug we northerners really were, as busing, affirmative action, and Willie Horton gave racial conflict a national franchise. Even in 1964, race relations up north were not quite as pacific as they seemed. In what amounted to a trial run of his 1968 and 1972 presidential bids, George Wallace ran in three northern Democratic primaries in 1964, winning 30 percent of the vote in Indiana, 34 percent in Wisconsin, and 45 percent in Maryland. Goodwill really started to unravel after the Watts riots of August 1965. A poll of northern whites taken four months before the riots found 71 percent approved of President Johnson's civil rights policies. Immediately after the riots, that figure dipped to 64 percent, and one year later, after rioting spread eastward to Chicago, Cleveland, and elsewhere, it sank to 48 percent. By 1972, when George Wallace's third presidential run was cut short by a would-be assassin, the redneck

Timothy Noah is a reporter for The Wall Street Journal.

**Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics.* Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall. *Norton, $22.95.*

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southern sheriff was no longer a national symbol of bigotry. He'd been replaced by Archie Bunker of Queens.

New Rochelle was a long way from Queens in just about every sense but the geographic; nobody I knew growing up ever supported George Wallace. But in retrospect even New Rochelle's sixties' glow of racial brotherhood looks pretty fragile. At the time, I liked to think that the grand drama of integration playing all around me was stage-managed by northern citizens who wanted to do what was right. In some cases—for example, the hiring of a well-qualified black principal in the days before affirmative action—it probably was. But in many other instances, it probably wasn't. It surely wasn't coincidental that the black family from Garrison Keillor country arrived on my street only after Congress outlawed certain practices real estate agents used to maintain the "traditional" character of affluent neighborhoods. As for the bused-in black children, I had a vague idea that the doors to my grammar school had been voluntarily flung open to the less fortunate in some sort of grand civic gesture. It wasn't until I was an adult that I learned that these children were in fact the beneficiaries of an early and bitterly fought northern court decision on busing.

But some hard realities didn't escape me, even then. We white kids from the wealthier part of town got along all right with the few middle-class black kids in school, but we never seemed to mingle satisfactorily with the the tough black kids from downtown, especially as we got older. Over the years, it became obvious that the bused-in black kids were more likely to lag behind in reading and arithmetic drills. By the time they became adolescents, many of these kids became bullies—to be sure, not the only bullies in school, but more conspicuous bullies because of their skin color. By junior high, many white kids were afraid to use the school bathrooms, a trauma that contributed to my parents' eventual decision to send my older sister to private school. About the same time, radical-chic Norman Mailer was proclaiming himself "tired of Negroes and their rights."

Chain links

Minus the personal details and the upper-middle-class slant, this is the narrative, more or less, of *Chain Reaction*. As the Edsalls see it, Americans came together on race for a brief moment in the mid-sixties, but their buried misgivings and disagreements soon began to tear the country, and especially the Democrats, apart. That political division now risks rigging presidential elections permanently in favor of the Republican party. Indeed, practically the only good news the Edsalls have to offer in this profoundly depressing book is that in the 1992 presidential campaign the nation may be spared Willie Horton-style racial themes—but only because this time the Republicans may not need them. The Edsalls note that 1992 "will mark the first time that suburban and exurban voters cast an absolute majority of ballots."

Thomas Edsall, the principal author of *Chain Reaction*, is a *Washington Post* reporter whose specialty is the influence of race and class on national politics. His strength as a political writer is his rigorously unsentimental view of how these forces play out in national elections. Indeed, Edsall's compulsion to back up all his political analysis with detailed poll data and economic statistics makes *Chain Reaction* seem more like the work of an academic than a newspaperman. (Edsall's father-in-law is the Harvard political scientist Karl Deutsch.)

According to the Edsalls, race is not only a divisive issue in itself, but also the divisive subtext to a number of other issues. When politicians propose a tax increase, the authors argue, many voters are liable to see it as a plot to take money away from working (white) two-parent families and distribute it to unwed (black) mothers on welfare. Similarly, the expansion of legal rights for criminal defendants is resented not just as a color-blind infringement on victims' rights, but specifically as a boon to the Willie Hortons. In both cases, fear and distrust of blacks are mixed up with more legitimate concerns about the erosion of traditional values.

Much of *Chain Reaction* is dedicated to investigating the grim statistical reality behind such fears. Blacks *are* much likelier than whites to be on welfare or to be criminals. Although in absolute terms, the number of whites and blacks on welfare is roughly equal, whites on welfare make up only 2 percent of the overall white population; 15 percent of the overall black population, according to 1988 data, is on the dole. Crime statistics are even more dispiriting. The Department of Justice found in 1987 that 60 percent of all robberies were committed by blacks.

What about the impressive advances blacks have made into the middle class since the sixties? The Edsalls cite 1980 figures (which I assume are the most recently available) showing that more than half of all blacks in managerial and professional jobs work for the federal, state, and local government, compared to 27.5 percent of whites. Thus, when whites rail against the size and inefficiency of government, the issue can easily get mixed up with race. When Ronald Reagan said in his inaugural speech that "Government is the problem," to many whites (and to many blacks in government) he may just as well have been saying, "Blacks are the problem."

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IF YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO BE RIGHT TOO SOON

Throughout the Gulf crisis, while the rest of the media acted as cheerleaders for war, we were almost alone in saying it didn't make sense to use our military might to devastate a small country when all we wanted to do was to punish one man. Does that sound odd, even crazy? That's what people said when:

➡ Well ahead of the others, we cracked the case of Washington, D.C.'s former mayor, Marion Barry, uncovering his administration's incompetence and corruption.

➡ Months *before* the stock market crash in 1987, we warned that program trading and low-margin stock options could turn a bad day into Black Monday.

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Of course, blacks have made major advances in the private sector too. But the cost, in many instances, has been white resentment, especially among blue-collar workers, against affirmative action policies. Among the consequences of affirmative action has been the restriction of ability tests for employment; the Edsalls cite studies concluding that blacks score substantially below whites, even when the blacks and whites have the same level of income and education. In an attempt to correct for this disparity, courts have in some cases allowed ability tests only if they are normed against other results within the same ethnic group, a practice that caused outrage this year when it came to the attention of Republicans who opposed the 1991 civil rights bill. (House Democrats quickly responded by attaching a provision to the bill banning so-called "race-norming.")

Gulf warriors

The Edsalls deserve praise for facing up to many of the not-so-pleasant facts about race. Unfortunately, they do not make enough of an effort to critically examine the often sizable gap between these dismal realities and what the white majority often makes of them. Antitax Reagan (and Bush) Democrats may tell themselves they'll be damned if they're going to pay more taxes to put black mothers on welfare, but the fact is that before the current recession began, welfare rolls were shrinking. Much more than welfare, tax increases throughout the eighties funded increases in middle-class entitlements such as Social Security—a program whose regressive tax levy and wasteful showering of cash on both rich and poor never seems to offend anybody's traditional values of equity and thrift. Another major growth area is criminal justice: Especially at the state level, more and more tax dollars are being used to build prisons—so many that prison guards are the fastest growing category of state workers. The Edsalls themselves note that the prison population has nearly quadrupled in the past 20 years. Is a prison-building binge any way to coddle criminals?

To be fair, most of what turned voters against the race, rights, and taxes agenda predates the eighties. Even here, though, the Edsalls seem to want to paint reality a shade gloomier than it is. For example, much is made in *Chain Reaction* of how the expansion of defendants' rights during the sixties was accompanied by a terrifying increase in violent crime that accelerated white revolt against civil rights. No doubt the more liberal climate helped create a breakdown in social restraint. At least as significant, however, was the simple fact that the baby boom greatly expanded the number of young males—the group most likely to commit crimes. Obviously, there's no pig-in-the-python explanation for the new violent crime epidemic that began in the late eighties. (In this case, the culprit appears to be the rise of drug-related gang violence.) Still, to write about the increase of crime in the sixties and seventies without making more than a cursory reference to the baby boom is like explaining the advent of rock 'n' roll without giving much attention to teenagers.

The Edsalls can be faulted, on occasion, for failing to show more skepticism about what statistics and expert opinions really tell us about race. For instance, although they don't flat-out say so, they seem to agree with the National Academy of Sciences' conclusion that employment test scores are good predictors of job performance, and seem to suggest that restriction of their use under affirmative action is a bad practice. Well, maybe so. I know from reporting on this subject that a lot of industrial psychologists think so. But I also know that industrial psychologists have what strikes me as an occupational overconfidence in their ability to design a test (or modify its results) so that it is both bias-free and perfectly reflective of the skill requirements of a particular job. Rather than try to sculpt the Perfect Instrument, wouldn't they—and we—be better off recognizing that such testing inevitably has some human-factor limitations?

In the political-reality department, it's harder to question the Edsalls' sharp reading of the nation's mood. Appeals to white fear and resentment of blacks have an enormous and shameful influence. Still, the Edsalls do not satisfactorily explain how Congress has remained in Democratic hands in an era when Democrats, the party of civil rights, have become almost irrelevant in presidential politics. (PAC shakedowns, gerrymandering, and other ways Democrats exploit their longtime majority status are part, but not, I think, the whole story.) And they spend no time at all contemplating the lessons of the 1987 defeat of Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, a case that revealed that in certain circumstances cold-blooded political realities can actually dictate support for, rather than opposition to, the civil rights agenda—even, and perhaps especially, for southern politicians.

None of these criticisms is meant to undermine the basic point of *Chain Reaction*, which is that the gulf between races is a festering and extraordinarily pervasive national problem. I doubt that children growing up today, white or black, experience the luxury I once had in New Rochelle of thinking that racial tensions and inequities are a problem of someone else's making. But this very good book would be better if it tried a little harder to correct, rather than simply catalogue, the misconceptions that have driven a wedge between white and black America. □

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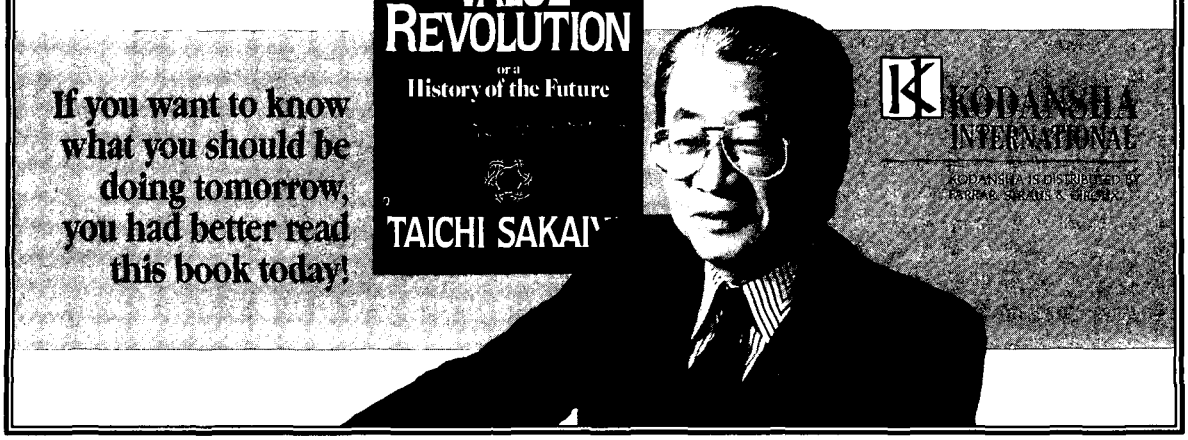

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Labor's Love Lost

Did the yuppies destroy the unions?

by Paul Glastris

Having spent most of the past 20 years defending union workers, Thomas Geoghegan,* a Harvard-educated attorney, thinks he knows who has devastated organized labor in America: people like him. Educated, liberal Baby Boomers, the kind he meets at fern bars in his neighborhood on the North Side of Chicago. These people, he feels, abandoned the labor movement in the eighties, if not before, consigning the working class to downward mobility as their own incomes rose.

Sure, others are also responsible: Congress, the Supreme Court, incompetent managers, corrupt union leaders, and the economic policies of Ronald Reagan. But in this ingenious and funny memoir, Geoghegan is hardest on his class and on himself. For he sees in his legal practice and in the laws under which he must operate a major reason for labor's decline. He makes an inspiring case for a rewriting of federal labor law, but appeals to fairness only get you so far. To regain the allegiance of liberals, Geoghegan has to convince them that stronger unions won't weaken an already shaky U.S. economy. Apparently, though, even he doesn't quite believe that.

In part, the tone of self-doubt that runs through this book is artful self-deprecation. Geoghegan struggles not to be the hero of his own autobiography. But he fails. He comes across as decent, honest, and capable, a man who has won some impressive victories for his clients, including a famous pension-rights settlement with the bankrupt Wisconsin Steel.

He also writes in the tradition of frustrated men and women of the Left who make forays into the working class, hoping to shed the guilt they feel about their own privilege. His failed attempts to bridge the class gap are part of his tragicomic schtick. Early in his career, two coal miners try to teach him to spit tobacco across the room into a wastebasket. "I had to get up, walk across, lean over the basket, and drool." Later, when he moves to the South Side of Chicago to work on a dissident steelworker election, he is giddy at the sight of it all: the brick bungalows, the Croatian restaurants, the corner bars with Old Style Beer signs over the doors, the vast mills—"So much capital just *lying* on the ground," marvels a student friend from Harvard B-school. But the dreariness gets to him. One day, he discovers Hyde Park, with its bookstores and BMWs ("I felt like a sailor seeing land") and moves out.

Striking out

There is an undeniable charm in his self-effacing honesty, and it serves his purpose. Geoghegan is a yuppie Everyman, not a saint. It is easy to empathize with him and, by extension, with his cause.

Yet after a while, you wish he would give his class-consciousness a rest. Awareness of class barriers is a fine thing, but too much of it can itself become a barrier. He wants us to empathize with his clients, yet too often they recede behind his own guilty reactions to them, as when he describes the dark art of interviewing potential trial witnesses:

> It was like an audition, really, as sick as that sounds. Their stories were numbing, all the same:
> "I lost my pension."
> "I lost my car."
> "I lost my wife."
> And I would think, silently, "Next."

Geoghegan uses his legal practice as a metaphor for the larger post-industrial transformation that has penalized honest, virile product-makers while rewarding shifty, effete paper-shufflers. That he is shuffling papers to *help* the blue-collar cause doesn't quell his feelings of inadequacy. Current labor laws, he says, make his job sisyphean.

In Geoghegan's view of labor history, unions saw their heyday after Congress passed the Norris-LaGuardia Act in the early thirties. The act took la-

Paul Glastris is the Midwest correspondent for U.S. News & World Report *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

**Which Side Are You On? Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back.* Thomas Geoghegan. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $19.95.*

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bor cases out of federal court jurisdiction. Unions could finally flex their economic muscle through strikes, free from the threat of court injunctions. But over the years Washington reversed itself. First came the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, which outlawed the mass strikes that labor leaders like John L. Lewis had used so effectively. Then in the sixties, liberal Supreme Court justices began "implying" no-strike provisions in all kinds of contracts, and enforcing them.

Geoghegan saw this firsthand. As a staff attorney for the United Mine Workers during the wildcat strikes in the seventies, he found himself pleading with the court not to impose fines while simultaneously begging the strikers to go back to work. Without the power to strike at will, labor's clout wilted. There were 443 strikes nationwide in 1972, he reports, but only 43 in 1989, "about the same as the number of prison riots."

The liberal justices had good intentions. They meant to force labor and management to settle disputes in a "civilized" way, through arbitration. But the effect has been merely to shift the balance of power to corporations, which have deeper pockets than most unions. "The big issue in labor management today is not who can survive a strike, but who can survive, without blinking, the arbitrator's bill." And because grievances take years to get through the clogged system, companies have learned, says Geoghegan, that they can violate the Wagner Act by firing employees who try to organize. By the time the company has been brought to task and forced to pay a nominal fine, the organizing drive is usually long over.

Thanks to the law, unions themselves have become litigious and bureaucratic. Union staff members who once stood on soap boxes preaching solidarity now spend their days like so many paralegals, filling out grievance forms and dreaming about going to law school. At the UMW, Geoghegan began to see the striking coal miners as a threat to the union and to his job. Similarly, union staff members have come to view arbitrations as unwelcome drains on union coffers and to treat their own grievance-filing members with the kind of disregard perfected by clerks at the department of motor vehicles.

Labor's pains

But the most serious failure of labor law is in the area of union democracy. Congressmen love to debate in great detail the legitimacy of elections in Central America, but they seem to care not a whit if the leaders of some local in Northwest Indiana are stuffing the ballot box. Geoghegan has witnessed, among other horrors, a Teamsters election in Chicago in which the officers hired El Rukn gang members as "security." The Teamsters are currently engaged in their first honest election, thanks to federal supervision. But for the rest of organized labor, the policy is *laissez faire*.

For instance, the Department of Labor can require new elections if union leaders deny a challenger the right to place observers in the polling place. "But over the years," says Geoghegan, "I've had several conversations with lowly Labor Department officials in Washington that go like this:

> "They've kicked us out of the room," I say. "They've denied us our right to observe."
>
> "Well," the man says, "that's a violation of the act. But did it affect the outcome of the election? As you know, that's what you have to prove."
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "Well, after they threw out your observers, did they do anything wrong?"
>
> "We don't *know*, obviously. They kicked us out."
>
> "Well, how do you expect us to bring the case?"

Though he expresses little hope that anything will be done, Geoghegan offers a plan he thinks would right these wrongs, cure unions of their ills, and allow working-class America to once again cut itself a fair share of the American pie. It's pretty simple: Get government out of the business of enjoining strikes and into the business of assuring fair elections. Require a neutral outside agency to count the votes. Provide public money for campaigns. Force unions to share their membership lists with challengers. (Amazingly, they are not required to do so now.) Will it help? For once, Geoghegan has no doubts. In Canada, where elections are cleaner, the unionized percentage of the workforce has risen from 25 to 32 in the past 30 years. It's fallen during the same period in the U.S. from 35 to 17 percent.

It takes a cold heart to come away from this book as anything but a believer in union democracy. Unfortunately, economics, not democracy, is what makes so many of Geoghegan's liberal friends wince at the thought of stronger unions.

A more perfect union

Nearly everyone now agrees that stagnant working-class incomes are a huge, shameful problem, especially in relation to the soaring salaries of American CEOs. There is also widespread agreement that unions serve a crucial purpose when they force corporations and government to pay closer attention to

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workplace health and safety issues. Alas, unions also tend to defend featherbedding, dated technologies, and inefficient work rules. Doesn't it seem, then, a bit self-destructive merely to change the law to give labor more bargaining power at a time when the ability of American corporations to compete globally is in serious doubt?

Geoghegan is coy about these economic concerns. One moment he endorses the view of New Left economists that Reagan policies, especially the high dollar, destroyed steel and other industries, and that the unions were merely victims. A page later he's not so sure. "The hard part about being in labor," he muses as he looks out at an abandoned steel mill, "is telling yourself 'It's not my fault.' "

You come away feeling that Geoghegan sort of knows that questions about work rules and efficiency are damning for unions, but in order to be on the moral side he has decided not to think about them. He tellingly confesses never to have been inside a coal mine or a steel mill, despite having represented coal miners and steelworkers for 15 years. He defends atomic workers fighting random drug testing, as if the possibility of stoned employees running nuclear power plants were no big deal. He is thankful that unions have found at least one growth market: the public sector. Yet he seems not to have noticed that liberal officials like Mario Cuomo can't cut personnel without maximum damage to services, thanks to seniority provisions in union contracts.

By avoiding the economic flaws in his plea for stronger unions, Geoghegan misses evidence that would actually strengthen his case. Labor economists are seeing signs that unions are playing a more beneficial role in the economy than you might think. Recent studies at the University of Wisconsin, for instance, show that unionized firms are better than nonunion ones at implementing the kind of team-based production systems that the management gurus say are crucial to U.S. competitiveness. What about the terrible lack of skills in the U.S. workforce? Most companies avoid training for fear their investment will be lost if the worker leaves. Why couldn't unions, which have better control over their members, become the key providers of training? In the auto, steel, and telecommunications industries, that is exactly what is happening.

Forty years ago, Big Labor had more than strong labor laws. It had a better justification to support its power: Higher wages, it was said, increase demand for goods and services, and hence boost the economy. That line isn't too convincing today. What labor needs is a new justification, a persuasive argument that strong unions will benefit not just a slice of the working class, but the country as a whole. □

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Public affairs books scheduled to be published this month.

The Hearsts: Father and Son. William Randolph Hearst Jr., Jack Casserly. *Roberts Rinehart Publishers, $29.95.* It's hard to resist savaging this book by a son of *the* Hearst, the mythic media mogul, and Jack Casserly, a speechwriter for President Gerald Ford. Turning the pages is like turning on the lights in a Lower East Side tenement kitchen. The cliches, like cockroaches, dance everywhere.

William Randolph Hearst Jr., whose preface is addressed to "my fellow Americans," tells us that he has "thought long and hard," "lived in the lap of luxury," and "looked death in the face." His father, we learn, "called a spade a spade." San Simeon's architect possessed "a steel-trap mind and a will of iron."

As for content, this timid tome, which bills itself as a firsthand peek at Hearst Sr., never gets near him. That's not entirely Junior's fault. As a child, while his parents lived in a mansion-sized New York apartment filled with museum-quality furnishings, he and his four brothers were relegated to a nearby apartment with cousins. After Hearst Sr., age 55, began seeing—then living with—mistress Marion Davies, age 21, the son's access to his father was again limited. But Junior sees his father with the unquestioning eyes of a loyal son.

WRH Jr., the 83-year-old editor-in-chief of Hearst newspapers, says his dad's anticommunist crusade, though it callously pilloried many Americans who were not Red, "has finally been vindicated." He cannot bring himself actually to view *Citizen Kane*, which portrays a Hearstian newspaper mogul, but he attacks the movie as superficial and inaccurate. He defends the fortune—today it would be valued in the billions—that his father squandered on San Simeon, saying, "It was his money."

While Junior writes a weekly column and won a Pulitzer Prize along with Joseph Kingsbury-Smith and Frank Conniff in 1956, in writing this book he seems to have forgotten the reporter's duty to dig for details and insights. The book settles instead for platitudes a publisher might spout—about, say, highway safety—to a Rotary Club luncheon.

That shouldn't be surprising. Hearst Jr. admits to an early career as publisher of New York's *Journal-American*, during which he would arrive at the office barely in time for an advertiser lunch and then go night-club-hopping until two or three a.m. Perhaps his life's "most important work," he says, was giving speeches for the President's Committee for Traffic Safety.

The book does have three redeeming features. First, titillating snippets: Ernest Hemingway, whom Hearst Jr. dismisses as "a pompous stuffed shirt," decked him with a quick left fist. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's leader, is both an "imperious, arrogant" racist and "a pompous, petulant little boy." Marion Davies, to help Hearst *père* through a crisis, lent him $1 million. Toward his end, during one of her drunken dazes, she approached him with scissors in her hand, screaming, "I'm going to cut your balls off."

Second, the book recalls some fascinating tales from the *Journal-American* newsroom. Samuel Crowther III, a snobby souse on rewrite, was asked by City Editor Eddie Mahar to obtain a telephone interview with an escaped convict holding a family of seven hostage. Crowther, amazingly, got through to the convict. The story, with banner headlines, made the paper, Hearst Jr. recalls, "champ for a day." Within hours, however, the police killed the convict and learned that he was a deaf mute. When Mahar demanded an explanation, Crowther could only whimper, "Gee, Eddie, the guy never told me that."

Third, Hearst Jr. comes across as a fair, hardworking, modest man—without his father's drive but with a commendable sense of decency. He wants to be remembered by his family as someone who did his best. I imagine he will be. But, when it comes to writing history, his best fails.

—*Loren Ghiglione*

Ed School Follies: The Miseducation of America's Teachers. Rita Kramer. *Free Press, $22.95.* In New York City's public schools, where I taught fourth grade this past year, every teacher is required to write a lesson's "aim," or objective—"To find the main idea of a paragraph," say—on the chalkboard before class begins. If a teacher forgets, the kids will shout out: "Hey! Teacher! What's the aim?" At some schools, a teacher who fails to supply the objective during a formal (often unannounced) observation cannot receive a satisfactory rating, no matter how well the lesson goes. In a system with very little accountability, knowing the aim provides two minimal assurances: that students know what they are learning, and even more important, that teachers know what they are teaching. I've seen classes in which neither has seemed quite certain.

For a year, Rita Kramer sat at the back of the class of America's schools of education and conducted her own informal observation of the lessons they teach. Her report, a scathing

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indictment of more than a dozen teacher preparation programs—from Michigan State University to Peabody College at Vanderbilt to Southern Texas University—reveals an educational establishment that has lost sight of the aims of its own profession.

Many of Kramer's complaints about ed schools are familiar: Undergraduate education majors, who end up learning more about how to teach than what to teach, graduate woefully ill prepared to impart even the basics of reading and math. Graduate programs, run by career academicians long removed from the realities of the classroom, pose unnecessarily high hurdles for those who'd like to enter the profession. Kramer concludes, "Everything [would-be teachers] need to know about how to teach could be learned by intelligent people in a single summer of well-planned instruction." As proof, she offers the success of New Jersey's alternate certification program, which requires a minimum of education courses and provides on-site training and support for first-year teachers once they've entered the classroom.

Kramer floats above the fray of the ed school classrooms she visits like Mary Poppins, pointing out absurdities with the tip of her black umbrella. Her attitude is invariably censorious, in a nagging-nanny sort of way. The prudish air of Kramer's prose is unfortunate, for it undercuts the important argument that her accumulation of anecdotes makes. In classroom after classroom, Kramer learns that the professed aim of most graduating teachers is not to transfer knowledge or skills to their future students, but to foster "self-esteem." Because there are no objective standards of accomplishment, to assess achievement through tests or by observation, or even by less traditional means, is considered "meritocratic"—a pejorative in ed school parlance that suggests the oppressive, hierarchical society it is the teacher's job to undermine. Consequently, the "self," the only standard of reference, becomes a kind of educational prefix, attaching itself to more traditional aims. An art lesson, Kramer relates, encourages not expression but "self-expression." A math lesson illustrates not concepts but "self-concepts." A social studies lesson develops not awareness of the world but "self-awareness." A student gains not knowledge but "self-knowledge." As one professor at California State University at Long Beach explains to her students: "More important than content or thinking are the students' feelings. You are not there to feed them information but to be sensitive to their need for positive reinforcement." With all this talk of positive and negative feedback, education is getting short-circuited.

The aims of teachers, Kramer asserts, have gone fuzzy—as in warm fuzzy. Classes resemble encounter group sessions in which students are encouraged to share feelings, air grievances, and bandy about mostly unexamined ideas as if they were Nerf footballs. The more elite the university, the more egregious the fuzziness. Here, for example, is a typical exchange of non sequiturs from a lecture at Columbia's Teacher's College:

> PROFESSOR: [W]hat if we could make a difference in human structures? There is a moral lack of care in this society.

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A STUDENT: I sort of think we've got to make ourselves happy first.
ANOTHER STUDENT: Most business people have no real commitment.
ANOTHER STUDENT: We are a society notoriously bad about funding poverty programs because we link them with work.
THE PROFESSOR: I am disgusted by the reliance on philanthropy instead of federal and state government responsibility.
STUDENT: An artist should be paid for doing what he likes, even if it's sitting on the porch and playing the guitar.
ANOTHER STUDENT: Malevolent market forces . . .
THE PROFESSOR: That's true. [She says this after almost every comment.]

As with most therapy, the discussions Kramer overhears seldom emphasize abilities, but instead focus on character. A class at Seattle Pacific University compiles a list of qualities a good teacher should possess. They include "patient, calm, praising, accommodating, sense of humor, trusting, firm but kind, flexible, cares about and loves each kid." As Kramer dryly notes, "There is not one mention of knowledge of any kind, or even of any special method of imparting knowledge."

To Kramer's claims for alternate certification, I can only add my own testimony. In the spring of 1990, I joined Teach for America. My reason for joining was simple: I had always wanted to teach public school in New York City, and Teach for America promised to negotiate the labyrinthine Board of Ed for me. (I had never been able even to get the right person at the Board on the phone.) I would not be circumnavigating standard certification procedures, but, like thousands of teachers in the city, I would teach on a "temporary, per-diem" basis. To prepare us, Teach for America provided an intensive two-month training program at the University of Southern California. Corps members took courses in pedagogical theory and practice and student-taught for five weeks in surrounding neighborhoods. The theory was for the most part irrelevant to my subsequent experience in the schools. Far more useful were classes that addressed practical matters of classroom management—such as what to do the first day, how to write a lesson plan, tips on where to place troublemakers in a classroom. (Put them in the four corner desks of the room—not in the corner, but *on* the corners—so that they are out of eyeshot of the rest of the class.) Student-teaching was the most valuable preparation of all, although even that did not prepare me for my own classroom experience.

I eventually got a job teaching fourth grade to Dominican kids at the top of Manhattan. As in the New Jersey alternate certification plan, I was assigned a mentor teacher in my school. It was she who taught me most of what I needed to know. Education is in the details, and most of the challenges of my first year were peculiar to my particular school, which was on a "split session." Mine was the most overcrowded elementary school in the most overcrowded district in New York City. To accommodate all of the students, we were forced to have two full sessions of school every day. I had to share a classroom with another teacher who taught the morning session from seven a.m. to noon. I taught from noon to 5:30 straight. Tips from the summer about how to prepare my classroom before my students' arrival were now irrelevant. I couldn't enter the room until they did. I could not plan my lessons around natural breaks in the day, as I did as a student teacher, because there were no natural breaks—no lunch, no recess. Rather, it was my mentor teacher who showed me how to fill out the red roll book, who explained how to assess my students' skills, who demonstrated lessons and showed me what would and would not work with the class.

Obviously, the weak link in this system is the mentor teacher. Mine was excellent, but what if one's mentor stinks? Expectations for alternate certification should not be too great. As one administrator in the Los Angeles Unified School District told *The New York Times* about Teach for America members employed by that school system: "I don't think they did exceptionally well or any better than fully

"Telling observations on how U.S. foreign policy is made and unmade." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

In this forthright autobiography, which grew out of a father-son relationship strained by disagreement over the Vietnam War, Dean Rusk reveals the inner workings of his public life, from the birth of the U.N. and the creation of Israel, to the Korean War, the Cuban missile crisis and Vietnam.

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Francis Miller, Life magazine

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credentialed teachers." Perhaps. But, like those in New Jersey's alternate certification program, they did it at far less expense and wasted time. That, as Kramer's book insists, is defense enough.

—*Sara Mosle*

Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse. Mary Ann Glendon. *Free Press, $22.95.* Not for nothing did the ACLU become the scapegoat of the 1988 election. Bush's rhetoric worked for the same reason good demagoguery usually does: It tapped into the unarticulated but pressing intuition of the people.

What was that dark feeling? That all this "rights talk" has gone too far, that policy discussions that should be carried on in terms of fair play and common sense have been frozen in the absolute language of rights: a right to welfare, a right to shelter, to abortion, to government contracts; prisoners' rights, pornographers' rights, even lab rabbits' rights; my right to clean air versus your right to smoke, or, as in the celebrated Boggs case in New York, my right to sleep on the sidewalk versus your right to live on a nice block. Last February the cover of *Harper's* finally posed the question directly: "Enough About Rights. What About Obligations?"

I had hoped that Glendon would give us a thoughtful answer. I was disappointed. Glendon is surely correct to say, as she does early on, that "the romance of rights" has overtaken the legal profession (or at least that sector of it devoted to public and constitutional law), "infiltrating the more carefully nuanced languages that many Americans still speak in their kitchens, neighborhoods, workplaces, religious communities, and union halls." She rightly asks "whether an undifferentiated language of rights is really the best way to address the astonishing variety of injustice and forms of suffering that exist in the world." But she never answers this in a very satisfying way. Instead the reader is treated to some Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau (*de rigueur* for a Harvard Law professor), a lengthy discussion of the erratic development of the right to privacy and the failure of American tort law to impose obligations of Good Samaritanism, the need for legal bases for child care and other family-oriented social welfare programs, and a broad-brush treatment of the use that continental and Canadian courts have made of American-style notions of rights, especially when it comes to abortion. Glendon makes a number of excellent observations along the way (for instance, that abortion ought more logically to have been seen as a prerogative of family planning than as a personal right to privacy) but fails to establish a convincing connection between the prevalence of rights talk and larger social and political processes, or to posit an alternative beyond her platitudes about "the mandate for self-restraint implicit in the rule of law."

A far more satisfying account of rights talk is the excellent book, *The Republic of Choice*, by legal historian Lawrence Friedman (Harvard University Press, 1990). The displacement of traditional face-to-face religious and communal authority by the remote politics of mass communication and the loosening of local ties by personal and social mobility, he says, have led people to see themselves more and more as self-created and alone, creatures of their own unfettered choices. "And why is society so rights-conscious?" Friedman asks. "Because a system of choices is meaningless unless a citizen can convert the choices to entitlements. . . . As legal rights and protections expand, as government takes on more and more jobs, fresh expectations are created—an upward spiral of demand and response." The balance of right and duty, he argues, has not vanished from modern legal culture. Rather, the two are "asymmetrically distributed; the trend, in modern law, is to impose duties on larger governments and institutions."

There is, I think, another factor behind today's rights talk—the civil rights movement. What made legal segregation so unique and so awful was its contradictory presence in the fabric of American law. So antithetical was it to the Constitution and constitutional procedures that virtually extralegal means had to be invented to dispose of it: a judicial sledgehammer, a super-legislature willing to drive a truck through the formidable barrier of contempt on which poor whites rested their dignity. In the process, the judiciary, and indeed the idea of the Constitution itself, became more powerful and seemingly more redemptive than ever before. A concept of rights strong enough to beat down segregation could not be easily put back in the bottle. Rights talk was born.

Today there is no denying that, as multiple claims of rights proliferate and government takes up the moral slack, individuals are relieved of the imperative that they take responsibility for their own actions and ultimately come to see each other less as fellows and more as adversaries. But how do you reconcile a liberal commitment to a vigorous public sector with the idea of personal responsibility?

This is the question being addressed by *The Responsive Community*, a new quarterly journal launched by sociologist Amitai Etzioni and co-edited by Glendon. "A responsive community," Etzioni writes, "is one whose moral standards reflect all the basic human needs of *all* its members." By this standard, no individual ought to trump the community while no community ought utterly to trump the responsible individual. There is a role for the public sector in seeing to the welfare of its individual members, without regard to race, gender, and creed, while framing its agenda in terms of the public good. In practice, this means (sampling from the most recent issue): anti-loitering laws narrowly targeted at street-level drug-dealing, good; draconian punishment for drug users, bad; workfare, good; sterilizing welfare mothers, bad; pluralism, meaning a healthy respect for difference mediated by shared American traditions of liberal democracy, good; multiculturalism, meaning the positing of ethnicity as the chief category of American life, bad. You get the picture.

One of the advantages of communitarian ideas over rights talk is their ability to mobilize action. A "right to decent housing" is like a blank check—it's a nice thought, but its content may be unrelated to reality. By contrast, an "obligation to provide decent housing" is a reasonably well-defined order directed to the public institution best equipped to fill it.

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Fundamentally, "communitarianism" seems to be an attempt to leapfrog back over the failures of post-1968 Democratic politics to recapture the spirit of the New Deal, incorporating the genuine strides of feminism, civil rights, and the rest while avoiding the rights-bound legalism that those developments brought with them. Before it calcified into bureaucracy and special interests, that New Deal ethos put government to work on a massive scale, not with the goal of guaranteeing everybody a happy ending, but of enabling the weak and disadvantaged to help themselves. That brand of liberalism did have its flaws, but when you realize that V-E Day, the GI Bill, and the civil rights and women's movements were just a few of its legacies, it does seem fair to say that recreating that spirit in today's weary, demoralized republic may indeed be something worth shooting for.

—*Yehudah Mirsky*

Galileo's Revenge: Junk Science in the Courtroom. Peter W. Huber. *Basic, $23.00.* At the newspaper where I toil, I am the happy recipient of correspondence from cranks: thick manila envelopes addressed, cryptically, to the Science Writer, inside which there is almost always something wonderful. Strange and unreported plagues. Radioactive beams from outer space. Government cover-ups. And would you look at this? Mars is hollow. I didn't know that. Wake up NASA, they have the photos to prove it! Perpetual motion machines? I have a file as thick as a messy divorce case.

Cranks are not fools. Though they have a penchant for extremely lengthy single-spaced letters, they employ at least the images of science. They love diagrams. They doodle formulae. They footnote like fiends. None of this, of course, changes the central fact about cranks, which is that they do not have a productive relationship with reality. No matter. They are, for the most part, harmless.

Not so the professional cranks in Peter Huber's book about junk science and its impact on the legal system. A senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Huber has written an angry, informed, entertaining tirade against pseudoscientific experts-for-hire and the credulous judges, greedy attorneys, and know-nothing juries who allow them to ply their trade.

"Maverick scientists shunned by their reputable colleagues have been embraced by lawyers," Huber writes. "Eccentric theories that no respectable government agency would ever fund are rewarded munificently by the courts."

Huber's cranks are not loons. But they see pattern and meaning, cause and effect, where their colleagues see random data points, chance, and no correlations. They are also paid to see such connections. At least one expert witness and the attorney who hired him are wrangling over $2,268,531.49 in promissory notes made to the expert during a series of trials on the effects of perfume chemicals on human health.

Huber's cranks conclude, based on "mosaic theories" and a few uncontrolled tests on lab animals, that the morning sickness pill Bendectin causes birth defects. Seven hundred women join a class action suit against the manufacturer.

Bendectin is yanked off the market. Birth defects do not go down. Instead, researchers note a two-fold increase in hospitalizations caused by severe nau-

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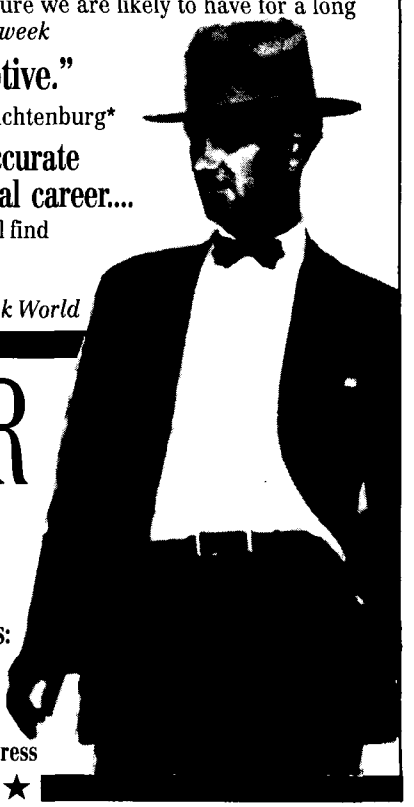

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LONE STAR RISING

Lyndon Johnson and His Times: 1908-1960

Robert Dallek

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sea and vomiting during pregnancy. Still, faced with protracted litigation, the company offers to settle for $120 million. The attorneys, working on contingency, receive about a third of that—making the initial outlay for experts a remarkably profitable investment.

Clearly, Huber's account of cases like these is going to make some people uncomfortable. The giant corporations that produce cars, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals turn out to be the good guys. Ralph Nader is the bad guy. Plaintiffs are hysterical. Attorneys are sharks. Reporters are saps. And so-called experts? Charlatans, liars, and frauds all. Huber can be blunt, opinionated, and rude. I like that.

"Batteries of meaningless, high-tech tests that would amount to medical malpractice or insurance fraud if administered in a clinic for treatment are administered in court with complete impunity by fringe experts hired for litigation," Huber rages. "The pursuit of truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth has given way to reams of meaningless data, fearful speculation, and fantastic conjecture. Courts resound with elaborate, systematized, jargon-filled, serious-sounding deceptions that fully deserve the contemptuous label used by trial lawyers themselves: junk science."

What's *real* science? Huber means science that is done by scientists, published in scientific journals, scrutinized by peers, reproduced by rivals, agreed to by consensus. The kind of science that may not ultimately be right, but is the best that human minds can do at the time.

Armed with this definition, Huber righteously walks the reader through the trials, the evidence, the claims and counter-claims, the experts (real and imagined), the appeals, the million-dollar awards, and the accompanying publicity of six different cases. Obstetricians cause cerebral palsy. Whooping cough vaccines cause permanent brain damage. Ingredients from a cosmetics plant cause "chemically induced AIDS."

This is not a politically correct piece of scholarship. Ford Pintos did have a tendency to combust. Mothers who took thalidomide did have babies with flippers. Huber documents junk science as practiced by experts for plaintiffs but never questions the science ginned up by defendants. He attacks the plaintiffs' attorneys as flamboyant, money-grubbing shysters who care little for their clients. But he fails to note that once upon a time, many consumers had little recourse in the courts. They were beaten down by big corporations that could hire armies of experts to swear that their chemicals and their products were not dangerous.

But things have changed. Thanks to aggressive consumer groups and the popularity of the class action suit, the playing field for junk science has leveled out a little. While class action has been growing more and more difficult since the Burger court waged war on it in the seventies, it nevertheless can promise enough of a payoff to large groups of "little guys" to make an initial investment in experts worth it. And it's not the corporations, but those expert-wielding little guys that make Huber really mad.

Consider the case of the Audi 5000, one of my personal favorites. Huber starts his tale with Ed Bradley and "60 Minutes." In 1986, the TV news program ran a segment that reported that Audi 5000s were mysteriously accel-

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erating, careening through garage doors and parked cars, despite the fact that their occupants swore they were jamming down on the brakes.

These arguments were supported by members of a group called the Audi Victims Network and experts at two Ralph Nader shops, the Center for Auto Safety and the New York Public Interest Research Group. On the "60 Minutes" episode, Huber writes, Bradley introduces 30 million viewers to the demonic Audi. An expert named William Rosenbluth claims that "unusually high transmission pressure could build up on certain model Audis, causing the throttle to open up." Bradley shows the Audi pedal go down by itself. What the viewers don't get to see is how the pedal went down. Rosenbluth had drilled a hole in the Audi transmission and pumped it full of air to simulate high transmission pressure. Zoom!

A class action suit was filed on behalf of 350,000 Audi owners, named and unnamed. Audi had a lampoonable defense. The drivers, they said, were stepping on the gas when they meant to step on the brake: the fat foot theory. Bradley didn't buy it. Why, he asked, do drivers make the mistake just in the Audi 5000?

Well, it wasn't just the Audi 5000. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration was at the time investigating sudden-acceleration events in the Honda Accord, General Motor's J-car, full and mid-sized Fords, Buick LeSabres, Oldsmobile Deltas, Pontiac Bonnevilles, and Mercedes Benz 300Es. Moreover, in none of the cases were the brakes shown to be out of order after the accident. The Highway Traffic Safety boys concluded that the problem was probably "pedal misapplication," though they failed to point any fingers.

As in many things litigious, the end results are foggy. Audi wins in court. Audi loses in court. It recalls cars. It moves the gas pedal further away from the brake. It pays millions of dollars in damages and settlements. Its sales plummet. More cases are pending. A car that ranks among the lowest in driver fatalities is considered by consumers to be a dangerous lemon. Is Huber right about Audi 5000s? Huber makes a good case that it *was* fat-footed drivers, not demons, who made the Audi suddenly accelerate. And he traces how this case hurt not just Audi, but people who want to buy Audis and people who want to resell them. As in the Bendectin case, junk science and the litigation it supports eventually cost us all something.

Huber also makes a damn good case against the cranks, who often turn out not to have the credentials they claim. And he concludes that judges should work harder to keep junk science out of the courtroom. "It is not liberal, open-minded, tolerant, scientific, or progressive to give equal time to astrology and astronomy," Huber concludes. "The modern judge who defers to mainstream science will at the same time defer to science's own, methodical acceptance of the possibility of error. To insist that things are more uncertain still is to deny things we know to be true, and to believe things we know to be false."

That sounds good to me, too. But the author's anti-Nader sentiments seem to blind him to the fact that reform must apply equally to large corporations, which still have the resources to outexpert the most affluent of public-interest groups. Junk science ultimately equals bad justice, no matter which side the experts are on.

—*William Booth*

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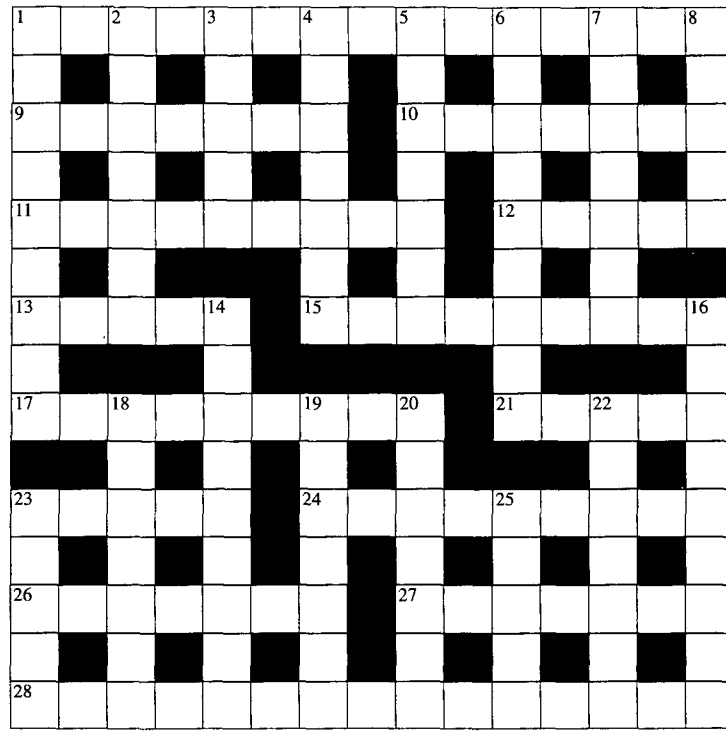
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



ACROSS

1. Doctor developed real site for national resource. (8,7)
9. Design on a Nash causing exclamation of praise. (7)
10. In midst of children ewe runs off *Monthly* patron. (7)
11. Distasteful outcast returns before Easter. (9)
12. Move rapidly in on madhouse manuscript. (5)
13. To carry last of system signal. (5)
15. Stood apart, constructed ten-sided square initially. (9)
17. Asner followed shifty Senator and sounded good. (9)
21. Non-extremist representatives are sufficient. (5)
23. Headwear worn in Nova Scotia rains. (5)
24. Contests about steel coin. (9)
26. Timeless, flooded after dropping in. (7)
27. Ex-president treats Connecticut ill. (7)
28. Distorted cable bugs Ted and political aspirations. (8, 7)

DOWN

1. Rhine riot controlled for successor. (9)
2. Drunk coming back on a point is still a drunk. (7)
3. Learn about kidney function. (5)
4. Surprisingly neat and finished. (2, 2, 3)
5. Uncontrolled railroad tease makes second assessment. (7)
6. In South America the French come to university to bring beverage back. (9)
7. Forced prow in net to land here. (7)
8. Uncommon people in Arles review. (5)
14. Island adds headwear and color and stays an island. (9)
16. French, Italian, and Turkey, for example. (9)
18. Prominent trouble and in French lakes rising. (7)
19. Crudely alerted to device for transfer of power. (7)
20. Eloped on the sly before British tennis strategy. (7)
22. Overhauled motor in athletics class and back. (7)
23. Digit is sign of activity in disease. (5)
25. First Texans running around nude adjusted. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:

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